

# CRUMBS AND HIS TIMES



DOLORS BACON

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# Crumbs and His Times

BY

DOLORES BACON

*Author of "Diary of a Musician,"*

*"The King's Divinity," Etc.*

*Bacon, Mrs. Mary Schell (Holic)*



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**Dedicated**  
TO  
MY SON CHARLES

**2125646**



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## CRUMBS AND HIS TIMES



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*"Give me the first seven years of a child's life, and I care not who has the rest."*

## CHAPTER I

### THE MOLLUSCAN STAGE

CRUMBS and I first became acquainted somewhere about his second hour. It was later that we called him "Crums"; not because of any foolish, fantastical notion, but because at about his fourth year it had become his habit to search the scripture of the parental mind at those times when he "wanted to know," and one day he asked me why I had "choosed" him. I explained to him I had made up my mind he was just about the sort of boy I wanted, and that I could not get on

without him. He expressed much satisfaction at my preference, and seemed from that moment to regard himself as having some advantage over his fellows. This was an attitude which I accepted as a sort of back-action tribute to me.

He mentioned some time afterward when I had chided him for breaking loose like an Indian as I entered the house after a short absence, that he "'sposed" he acted that way in my presence, rather than in the presence of others, because I had "choosed" him. Also, that he "'sposed he woved" (short on l's,) me for the same reason; that as I just had to take him instead of some other, he "'sposed he felt differ'nt" about me.

It seemed to me this had a bearing upon the matter of pre-natal responsibility. I do not know that I should have formulated my thought thus, if I had not begun long before to sit at the feet of Crumbs and learn. I was glad at that moment when he spoke so confid-



ingly, so simply of my choice, that I had chosen him—chosen him long before I knew him. At any rate I had thought of him very much as he was, long before he was born.

After this discussion of my choice, he asked if he had been “just crumbs” before I “choosed” him. This protoplasmic thought in so youthful a mind seemed worthy of recognition; hence, “Crumbs.”

He was never pleased with the name because, as he explained, he had ceased to be “crumbs” when he was “choosed.” However, he submitted in a graceful spirit of accommodation on the ground that since I had preferred him to all others, there were certain indulgences due from him to me. In this I recognised an *original tendency*—a tendency toward fairness. I do not know that Crumbs’ attitude toward me changed for many a day; and during the process of his early development, it was only necessary for me to remind him that I had chosen him with all my heart in order to

receive from him some benefit. Later, he was to serve me for love alone.

When I first saw him he looked pathetically like an old gentleman to me, and quite absurdly like one to other people; absurdly like, no doubt, because they had not chosen him. Though he was absurd to others and pathetic to me, I longed to think there must be some particular in which there could be no change. I thought I should like to look upon his eccentricity of feature say forty years afterward.

There came an early day when Crumbs, who had seemed to be as blind as a kitten, refusing to open his eyes, contemplated me seriously. Then I felt that I, too, had been chosen, and I was glad, since many are called to motherhood, but I doubt if all are properly chosen.

My cook had told me that infants neither smiled nor shed tears at two weeks of age, but if that be the rule, Crumbs was in no way circumscribed by

it. He did not have to smile; he had little upward and outward wrinkles about his eyes that did the business for him. When we looked at each other, Crumbs' wrinkles would break up, and our anti-phonal was not the less profound in its meaning to me, because unsounding. Crumbs had a talking pair of eyes, even in the molluscan period of his existence.

That sun-rise love of ours seemed to rejuvenate Crumbs within the week. By that time I had begun to resent not only a change of feature, but that transmutation of tissue, scientifically, inevitably, to take place in the course of days and years. I wanted him just as he was, never to become grown up, never to become helpful to himself or me, but just to remain a little pulpy oyster who demanded me to be all his, and who knew me to be so by a faculty greater than reason. But of the things which I resented most at this time was a midnight conference between Crumbs' grandmother and his father. So far I had

been left out of these consultations, as one whose mind was without form and void on the subject of her own son. Crumbs' father and grandmother were divided upon the subject of aniseed tea—should it be taken, and if taken, should it be administered with a spoon to a two-weeks old child?

His father was conservative, and objected to what he believed to be an experiment. Crumbs' grandmother had given aniseed tea—out of a spoon—to five children of her own and to several children who belonged to her young, untried female relatives; she ought to know something about it. I have since suspected that she did, but that midnight I was taking no chances. I preferred to save the baby and to put his grandmother through her examination afterward.

Not having anticipated the issue of aniseed tea in a spoon, I was no better prepared to render judgment than Solomon would have been, hence I kept

silence and prayed for wisdom. The boy's father was of the opinion that aniseed tea filled the boy up to no purpose; that if he was hungry he had better have his more sustaining food. Crumbs' grandmother was of the opinion that the boy had already had too much, and that aniseed tea was useful principally to mislead him, to make him think that he was getting something, while in fact he was getting nothing at all. Thus, by easy stages, the argument drifted from the material to the moral question: shall we give him aniseed tea or shall we inculcate the first principles of self-control?

His father thought the grandmother absurd; his grandmother knew the father to be so. Meanwhile, Crumbs, who after all was said and done on the subject of aniseed belonged to me, had swallowed enough of the surrounding atmosphere to make him cry to some purpose. Without awaiting the call of wisdom, I signified that I was awake and knew what to



do since I had chosen him, and I did it. A woman is never a prophet in her own family, and the fact that a warm contact and a sympathetic hand upon a much discussed "tum-tum" brought peace, did not convince anybody; but it established my supremacy, if it also interrupted a large moral disquisition upon the subject of Crumbs' stomach.

About this time I took to making it difficult for Crumbs to breath through his mouth. I leaned up on my elbow half the night watching him not do it, because his father had an idea that one could not begin too early to form a child's proper habits. For my part, I never had any notions about Crumbs' habits nor his bringing up. I always felt that it was going to be infinitely better to "instinc" it—Crumbs' own word later—while the conditions of uncertainty were upon us.

In the first month I discovered so many rules which didn't fit Crumbs, that I decided either he was an exceptional

child, or the rules applied to babies were mere tales of sound and fury, signifying nothing in this world.

For example, the prescribed amount of milk once in two hours Crumbs couldn't hold with comfort to himself or with convenience to other people. He had a sort of three-quarter gill capacity with a pint assimilative gauge, which meant a little less a little oftener, and there he was, right as a trivet! Yet a circumscribed spinster, who was learning in a teacher's college all about how to bring up a mother, made unpleasant remarks concerning the frequency with which Crumbs was fed one day when I had been self-sacrificing enough to let her have luncheon with us.

Another perfectly seasoned mother, who had brought four massive percherons into the world, each of whom might have begun on tacks, or anything else that could have been boiled, reminded me that I was to "Let him cry! what else are babies for? Good Heaven! It's good

for 'em. " All the while, Crumbs was getting black in the face for want of a little decent treatment, because in deference to the lady with the percherons I was bringing him up according to rule for the afternoon.

Then there was a rule about putting something or other on his head, which should soften something or other which was not there, and about doing it each morning after his bath. Whatever it was that was prescribed, it made him smell salvey and glisten unpleasantly. I waived that rule without mentioning it, he had his head washed in honest soap suds and lived through it. I learned afterwards that it was not necessary to use the stuff if babies did not need it, but it was the *rule* to use it, to make sure they should not need it.

There came a piping hot day when he was a month old—after we had been confidants for two weeks,—and he signified to me that even very young oysters should be clothed with some regard for

their feelings and the weather. A family howl went up that belonged to the dark ages and the *rule*, when I took off a few layers of Crumbs' clothing. Another baby who was going to live according to rule till he was able to kick the rules to Kingdomcome, and who lived just over the way, was all speckled,—according to rule—but Crumbs was as comfortable as one set of flannels could make him. When in doubt about him I played the trump of instinct. Instinct, of course, was Crumbs' trump card also, and our combined blindness frequently resulted in some uncommon good sense. At those times when we missed, we laughed and didn't tell anybody.

For some time we added greatly to the gaiety of nations—represented by the German cook, the Swedish house-maid, the Irish nurse-maid and the man-about who owed his characteristics to an international alliance—but I stood firm for Crumbs, and tried to live patiently under the opprobrium cast upon me by

discreeter women. Some of them had had six babies to my one, but I am still convinced that they had been less in their confidence than I was in the confidence of Crumbs.

However it was, for a very long season we had an anxious time of it; because, if we guessed right, nothing was going to happen; but, if we guessed wrong, everything was going to happen. There was the teachers' college mother, the lady of the percherons, the mother according to rule over the way with her speckled baby, and there was Crumbs' grandmother, eternally wracked because she had brought up four children and I hadn't. It did seem to me that I must be a fairly good example of how not to do it. Finally there was Crumbs' father. He didn't set up as an authority, but even while he stood by us, I knew that he was apprehensive, wished we wouldn't, and only refrained from asking us to take advice because he was loyal unto death. He



might not be able to save us, but he could die with us.

There were dreadful moments when I did not positively know if it had been I, or his father, or his grandmother, or his nurse, or almost anybody else that was his, who had given Crumbs birth; but through it all I stuck to the superficial truth that he was mine by divine right of that personal preference shown me by him. Hence, although we were decimal—one, and say nine tenths (Crumbs being the one)—in point of numbers, yet Crumbs and I, by hanging together, managed not to hang separately, and things finally went off as well as if we had gone by rule instead of by love. Neither of us boasted of this, because we had a hard enough time as it was, but we early recognised that we must pool our issues against an experienced and critical world, if Crumbs was to begin as an individual and not as a polyp.

I did not start him out on individual lines during his first moments for he did

not stand in immediate need of such treatment; but I did not long delay, because I felt that the sooner I, myself, fell into approved lines, the better for our future relations. His embryonic condition could not be for long, and the sooner I began to regard him as my own child, and not as a teachers' college mother's child, the better for Crumbs and me.

I believed that he had a kind of dignity to consider, even while in the oyster state, because he was ours. This may have been a sharp egotism on my part, but not a very harmful one, if not carried too far. Moreover, a man, woman or child must have plenty of egotism if he is going to be a good citizen. The man who doesn't feel that he, personally, is responsible for the enforcement of law and order, in pretty much every quarter of the globe, is the man who is not going to be too particular to establish residence about voting time; and his excuse is going to be that it's no use so long as the Primaries are run as they are!

I intended Crumbs to think himself of so much importance in this world, that when he saw the Artful Dodger at work he would mention it to a policeman. I knew that Crumbs would necessarily get himself more or less disliked at times, but if he came to be known by the sort of enemies he made, I could stand it, because I meant to help him make the right ones.

## CHAPTER II

### INFANT FADS AND FANCIES

SEVERAL things had happened in the readjustment of the household which, before Crumbs' birth, I had regarded with tranquility if not with enthusiasm. As an example: the room allotted to Crumbs had been elaborately fries-ed and dado-ed with birds, animals and other such matters supposed to be presented in their natural colours. It had seemed to me, in contemplating the result, that the artist had had periods of colour-blindness while engaged upon the job, or that the colour-press lacked training. However, since this had been done with a view to developing Crumbs' incipient and imminent mind I had let the work go on; especially since it pleased the grown-ups. But at six months, Crumbs, with all his

educational advantages, didn't know the American eagle from good red-herring, and I had contracted a continual nightmare.

The tails of the birds "in natural colours" took to wagging at me in my sleep, and most of the creatures turned out to be loons who laughed a merry "Ha, Ha" every time I went into the room to make sure that the window was down from the top—which it was not—and that the hand that ruled the world was not doing its worst—which it almost always was. That the baby's milk should not be churned inside it, and that the crib rockers should be regarded solely as reminders of a by-gone crime—these were the only things upon which I and the Teachers' college mother agreed. I was willing that the rockers should be there as a sort of sop to history, but I did not mean them to be used. But you couldn't make Crumbs' grandmother nor the Irish nurse regard the rockers as sacred history. To them, rockers were

still contemporaneous, and I fear they made new digestive combinations inside the baby right along, till I had them—the rockers—removed and given to the janitress to put on the receptacle in which her own child slept.

I have said that, in theory, Crumbs was expected to grow up with a knowledge of the flora and fauna of his own and other countries; and as nearly as I could understand, the knowledge was to be absorbed through his pores and from his earliest infancy. This method of taking his knowledge in through his cuticle, assimilating it with his breakfast, dinner, supper and the between-snacks, was expected to make the path of learning a broad, straight way for him. Also, he was to have as second nature, a taste for the exquisite in form and colour. That was why the bath-tub had a garland about it—roses growing with floricultural irregularity, out of a passion vine, all painted in pastel shades. The hearth-rug had a dog upon it—a woven-in dog.



I had objected to nothing that had been done except the dog, but since there was to be a dog, I felt that it should be of some defined breed, or at the very least a generic dog. As it was, it was a cross between a grey-hound and a spitz, with a hint of erstwhile fashionable coach-dog on its stomach. I think it was a well-beloved aunt with advanced ideas who had stood for these inovations, and she, having no sporting instincts, could not be expected to choose a proper dog for Crumbs to turn to as a fount of learning. But it worried his father and me, and I felt that, since the nursery equipment was to be wholly educational, the distressing spots on the dog's stomach should have been more regular, perhaps have borne the letters of the alphabet. Certainly, the hearth-rug taught nothing at all about dogs.

Of course Crumbs knew no more of ornithology at one year of age than I knew of the differential calculus, but his powers of observation along those es-

pecial lines were stunted a five years' growth. Those birds and things "in natural colours" he had always with him, and they might as well have been fly-specks on the wall for all the note he made of them. At three years of age, after he had enjoyed the companionship of his father's old guide for two weeks, and had gone to the field in the wagon with the dogs, he knew more about the things that had been upon his one-time nursery wall than Audubon himself could have known; because Félix, the guide, had a fancy as well as useful intellect. He knew how to make matters of forest and stream picturesque to children. If the guide had only been upon the nursery wall—

With pastel shades all about him from his earliest infancy, Crumbs developed a surprising taste and took to the raw, untamed national colours as a duck to water, even before he knew their meaning. We owned a camp-chair whose seat was pinked out in red, white and blue, and

Crumbs liked that. He liked it tremendously, crude as his colour sense must have been, if one were to give preference to the nursery resolvents of the spectrum. I admired his judgment on the sly, since, after all, there was some meaning in Crumbs' choice. One may give up meaning anything, or regarding life seriously after one has passed the eightieth year, but before then it is always well to regard cause and effect.

We fell to talking baby talk together about all the things for which the colours of the camp chair stood—about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Those were the things I was sitting up nights at that time to secure to Crumbs; and even at twelve months he seemed to be appreciative. Crumbs' father was full of patriotism, in that he believed wholly in American institutions, and yet, as a nomad who felt it the duty of mankind to have gunned in every quarter of the globe, I had never known him to vote. However, if his pursuits pre-

vented him from establishing residence, he always used accoutrements of American manufacture.

That Crumbs' father did not vote had very greatly distressed me, although perceiving my feeling to be one of the inconsequent vagaries of womankind, I had never mentioned it; but here now was Crumbs, almost all mine for the present, and already in love with the national colours on the camp-chair. I began to plan ahead twenty years. If he should vote twice each election for his three-score years, minus the first twenty-one, he might by this deed of supererogation make up for the negligence of his restless, if conscientious, father.

Crumbs and I talked a good deal about this. I think he began with that camp-chair to assimilate a sense of the obligations of good citizenship. When the family intruded upon our *causeries* and made remarks, I went within the room still sacred to the birds and beasts—"in

natural colours," stood upon the hearth-rug dog and felt comforted.

Crumbs' father never expressed himself to any extent upon the subject except once when Crumbs had achieved his thirteenth month. Upon that occasion, while I was showing him a before-election parade and trying to demonstrate its lack of relation to the camp-stool and the flag, Crumbs' father said:

"You'll get notions into that child's head which can never be got out." I appeared apologetic, but secretly, I rejoiced.

Notwithstanding his early training in pastel shades, Crumbs had no affinity for æsthetics till one day, about his fifth year, a young woman whom he liked exceedingly, because she knew more about Indians than if she had been born one, wore a resada and blue-coloured gown. It was a truly French combination that certainly required a nursery training to appreciate; a combination that ordinarily needed to be worked up to by

easy stages. She wore this upon the day she impressed him as "a awful bully girl," and Crumbs tied those colours to his hat-band and stood ready for the lists and her benediction. From his earliest breath he had been trained into an appreciation of the choicest combinations in the spectrum, but he chose an up-to-date French agony, unreal and unrelated, however you looked at it; and all because it was worn by "a awful bully girl" who had told him all that she did not know about Indians.

Crumbs was born a strange fusion of the literal and the ideal. When we drew near to that second Christmas after Crumbs' birth, how I longed to have him enjoy the pleasures of legendary deception and believe in Santa Claus! Two weeks beforehand, his father achieved the impossible by converting the steam-radiator into a fire-place fallacy. He pounded upon the steam-pipes with a lead pencil to summon the spirit of Christmas, then confided Crumbs'



wants, *sotto voce*, and replied in a ventriloquistic way that none but a fond father could have achieved without more practice.

A poem of suspiciously personal nature was contributed to the occasion by a friendly genius who, year after year, had successfully fooled legions of children belonging to his acquaintances. All this was done that Crumbs might revel during a few adolescent years in the delightful, world-old lie. But from the first, Crumbs regarded the performance as a foolish emprise in which he must indulge the old-folks. We never really knew what he thought about it till he was three years old. At that time the third annual poem was taken from the toe of his stocking to which it had been pinned. He had a fleeting glimpse of his father, somewhat larger in girth by two sofa pillows; and he heard the jingle of the sleigh-bells—the entire ritual—but he exhibited only patience instead of pleasure,

He expressed his feelings, characteristically, after the exhibition was over:

"Don't nobody tare! Santa Claus is fat wike the ice-man. Ice-man don't say whymes!" This, *à propos* of the poem. From that time, Santa Claus poems came only on the twenty-sixth of August, birth-day time, and then in their sane and proper guise of "advice to youth."

The following Christmas I stopped lying, and the grown-ups were the only ones who felt badly about it. Crumbs crawled into my bed after that last exhibition of steam-pipes, bells, Santa Claus and all, and said:

"If there is a Santa Claus, don't nobody tare! If *you* gave me the waggin I could wove it." I betrayed the secret of the ages upon the spot, and then lay awake for the next six months trying to reconcile Crumbs' literal tendency with his imaginative disposition. At the end of six months I had something so much worse to worry about, although I have now forgotten what,

that until now the detail slipped my mind.

I never could reconcile Crumbs and his works, and early gave up trying. Anyway, who wants to solve a puzzle? After one is able to get all the pigs in clover there is nothing more to be done with them. It is the man who takes the thing to church with him, who sits up nights with it and who yet never does get it right who deserves congratulation.

During Crumbs' first three years of life, I felt my responsibility toward posterity, and continually laid up treasures that should mark the several stages in Crumbs' career and which should "make up" well in the event of a photographic interview about his thirty-fifth year. I expected the things would eventually find their way to the Museum of Natural History, the British Museum or the Smithsonian Institute. I was vague as to the place where such things went, but not as to the fact that I was assisting to make history.

For example: I put away the first thing that ever attracted his attention enough for him to make an intelligent effort with his hands. I had to take the furniture apart to get it because it was the brass knob on the arm of a rocking chair. I put it away with the date, which, as a matter of fact was a reasonably early one for a child to "take notice" with his hands; although his grandmother tells me that if he hadn't taken notice then, we might have considered him an idiot. I do not think so. Possibly it was time for him to take notice, but he did it in a way different from other children.

At the time I was having the chair taken apart, Crumbs' father said that it would make the boy feel like a fool to have his wife and her mother come across the collection. (I had not mentioned the British Museum to his father.) I already had a fairly complete outfit, and everything labelled. I had the entire night-lamp with the red chimney which had marked Crumbs' first recognition of

anything in particular except his meals. I had the careful history of all of those things, and I rejoiced in them; but upon the occasion of the brass knob, Crumbs' father managed to impress upon me that after all I was laying up misery and humiliation for the child. So one afternoon, with Crumbs propped up near me on many little pillows, I got out all those evidences of a fond foolishness, and before his eyes I put them resolutely from me. His father said, not without reason, that if I continued to collect things under sentimental pressure we should have to hire a warehouse somewhere between the boy's tenth and twelfth years; and by the time he was a full-grown man we should have to move to some boundless pampa.

After I had the collection adjusted for the dry-garbage man, Crumbs' father came home and asked me what I was doing. When he found out, he began to look things over with an eye to saving "some one sensible memento" of Crumbs'

infancy. I left Crumbs alone with his father—and I have the complete collection inviolate still.

I agreed with his father however, to maintain secrecy, because he said that to have such things hauled out when a man is twenty or thereabouts, together with a picture taken in a shell with no clothes on to speak of, is enough to destroy the best intentioned man's resolution to be right rather than to be President. I was never taken thus in a shell and do not understand; but Crumbs' father was, and I have always felt for him when the family album with plush mountings is around.

The affairs of Crumbs' infancy were so irregular that I find myself unable to recall them with much sequence; which leads me to believe that an analytical consideration of myself might in some way account for the irregularities of Crumbs and his Times. However that may be, we had one thing to tie to: there was no irregularity of affection to



recall; no intermissions were there in his superficial training. The worthy incidents of Crumbs' training certainly were the results of a benign fate. His father and I had some large and creditable theories upon the subject of boy-culture, and I have them yet no doubt, although it is years since I have made a search; but his father and I agreed that our theories were altogether too fine for everyday use, and we carefully put them aside for Sundays and holidays. *A propos* of this economy, at about two months old Crumbs fell to getting inside his father's shirt at about nine of the clock, and thus sleeping, he was perambulated about the house till all hours. I knew it to be an irregularity of infant culture, but since his father did not mind, Crumbs waxed fat, and I loved to see the procession, I maintained a reasonable silence.

As his father put it: "If I were a poor workingman who must be in the trench at seven o'clock in the morning, instead

of on the cotton exchange at eleven, or a poorer society man who must be on the tread-mill *all* the time, I dare say this would not be proper. But as I am nothing on earth but the chap's father and have no higher aspirations, I guess he may as well have things as he likes them while I can walk, and that seems to be about all he does like between the hours of nine at night and two in the morning. Besides, this doesn't over-work our method."

I dare say if we really had any method there was madness in it, but it did not make Crumbs unlovely. As long as his father walked, Crumbs smiled; and when he ceased to walk, Crumbs didn't make any fuss. He simply ceased to look joyous, which was punishment enough for us.

In those days of Crumbs' embryonic career, his father and I were not well thought of by our friends, yet with it all Crumbs was not a bad baby. About his sixth month the lines of antiquity had

begun to leave his face and he laughed from the inside out. He was not very robust and was frequently given to fevers; but these things did not seem greatly to disturb his gaiety. His fevers took place mostly when I got stalled on the elevated, and they were likely to disappear soon after my return home. Yet Crumbs could not have been called exacting.

Since, with the method of his bringing up, he should have been a miserable little tyrant yet was not, I was reminded to think him out. The discrepancy certainly had to do with character.

As time passed, I knew that Crumbs had been born with the germ of a devoted disposition, and that most of his peccadillos were the result of blind, elemental affection.

## CHAPTER III

### ORIGINAL TENDENCIES

CERTAIN original tendencies were first made manifest to me when Crumbs was three years old, and an assortment of children convened upon the occasion of his birthday.

They were mostly normal children, therefore mostly stomachs, and a division of the spoils became a large and serious matter. Crumbs was five years high at three years of age, with a long, pliant muscle against which the herculean, knotty muscle of a five year old boy did not seem to have much show. Before anyone could interfere, Crumbs waived the rules of hospitality, possessed himself of all the bananas and rendered himself inaccessible behind the piano. Under the circumstances, discretion seemed to

be the better part, and the small fry were resupplied. Meantime I called Crumbs' attention to one very little girl who was in the throes of heart-break and gustatory disappointment. With a new and somewhat superior supply before them, I called Crumbs' attention to the fact that greedy people gather no moss. He voiced his philosophy.

"Don't nobody tare!" This was simply his method of implying that he was already possessed of all that he could conveniently assimilate, and that anybody else was welcome to what he was indifferent to.

Upon the evening of that day I whipped him. He cried pitiably, and as soon as he could recover his breath he mentioned: "Don't nobody tare!" I knew that my purpose had miscarried, and that I had discovered another *original tendency*—resistance! Crumbs would never be made docile arbitrarily.

This was no trivial matter. A child who can be whipped into decency is easy

enough, if not good for much; but a child who must be thought out represents ruin or glory, just as he stands in his clothes at three years of age, or even less; and it doesn't depend upon the child, but upon the men or women who handle him.

The child who is not amenable to the easy and primitive method of thrashing is a reasonable being. Since he has begun to reason so soon, nine times out of ten he is the superior of his parents, because the habits of the parents have become the instinct of the baby, and he has started where they left off. At any rate this Darwinian science does well enough for the lay mind which does not grasp the modern biological fact that acquired characteristics are not transmitted.

It occurred to me upon the evening of the party, that in the course of time—say at the age of twenty-five years—Crumb might find his banana in some other man's new spring over-coat, and he might take it and get behind the piano as it were; then somebody would get



him out and Crumbs would be in gaol. If that happened, Crumbs would not be happy, and I was working for his happiness.

The desire for something to which one has no right may lead to almost any place or anything that is unpleasant, and to an over-wrought imagination there was a relation between the bananas of the afternoon and the spring over-coat of several years hence. Perhaps I could not have applied any moral code whatever to Crumbs, if the application must have made for morals alone, but there was Crumbs' happiness!

A love of right for its own sake is a development that belongs exclusively to civilisation. Before that, we exact our own rights by the easiest method and leave the other fellow to get his. By the time the easiest method proves to be a reciprocal system, and "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" step in to clinch the matter, we may have acquired, some of us, that instinct which was the

habit of a former generation, and we may have learned blindly to love right for itself alone; but at most it is the guarantee of training—training but of yesterday or to-day—and the only thing one can actually depend upon is the fundamental tendency. All humanity has one in common—the tendency to be happy. I knew Crumbs would determine to be happy. He could not be happy if he were in gaol for ten years. Ergo: I hastened to avert the sentence.

About this period, a friend, full to the brim of human kindness and a “before the war” sense of the fitness of things, whose two sons were living examples of glorious mind and matter, smiled at my apprehensions and assured me that decently born children “went right in spite of the devil and training.” This notion, born of his own good luck, was so much more absurd than my method that I turned to Crumbs himself for needed wisdom. Thus far he had been pretty nearly the only one who had been able

to teach me anything; now his salvation began in earnest—and we had an awful time.

We began with the theory, acknowledged by me, winked at by Crumbs, that the Young Carpenter Himself, might have got into trouble earlier if Mary had not thought out the basic proposition of his happiness. Beyond doubt, the Sermon on the Mount echoed the tender, childhood hours with Mary, when she involuntarily did unto Him as she would have Him do unto others!

As I held Crumbs under the microscope I knew to a certainty that of all the children I had ever known—and they were not many, because until the present administration I had had no large interest in children—my child stood the best chance of getting into the social and legal stocks.

Crumbs was self-absorbed and not to blame for it. With the maternal instinct within me, I had taken no account of little children not my own. After my own child occurred, I took account of others

largely in contrast with Crumbs. I regarded it a blessed privilege to sit up nights with Crumbs and nurse him in his illnesses, but I should not feel it a privilege to sit up nights with some other woman's child, although I certainly should do so if occasion and humanity demanded it. But the joys of healing and of creating universal happiness are no larger in me than in most people. It is the exception who takes to the hospital for fun.

After a self dissection, I found myself in a state of great humility when I thought of Crumbs, and beheld how my general defect of self-absorption appeared *in him* as the specific meanness of personal selfishness. It became my problem to overcome for him a ruinous heritage, and after that I knew no peace.

For long weeks my inclination toward extremes worked itself out in my imaginings, and Crumbs' definite danger took the form of gaol and the liking for another's new spring overcoat. This

psychical evolution had begun in the spring, hence I never imagined our Deus ex machina to be a *fall* overcoat.

In course of time, I took to weeping spasmodically in the night at the ever recurrent picture of Crumbs at the bar of justice, with the smile from the inside out forever gone. I even began to devise ways and means for corrupting the judiciary. I thought at one time that it would be well for me to make unto myself friends of all the magistrates within my reach, that I might be ready to buy Crumbs off at the proper time. I grew to thinking that all the world might be corruptible for Crumbs' sake, but soon I began to see the futility of such procedure. I might hope to lead a few honest men from duty, but how if Crumbs were to be in Europe when he coveted the overcoat? I was willing to spend my life in suborning justice, but obviously the scheme was impractical, and I am seldom impractical, outside my imagination.

As the nights passed after days of combat with Crumbs, and I could no longer in reason hope to buy for him immunity from the results of evil doing, I began to devise ways and means of helping him to escape his place of incarceration, after which we were to fly to—but there! I abandoned that line: there is extradition almost everywhere now.

Be bad—and the goblins'll get you! That was the whole of it. That was about all the growth out of my fearsome thoughts.

After that I wept at night, while mentally preparing good things for Crumbs to eat, which I should carry to him in the penitentiary. About two o'clock in the morning, when it was Crumbs' infant habit to turn over and reach out of his crib to find my face, I could no longer endure the agony of my imaginings, and I fell to waking him, as the little hand plunked down upon me in the night, and begging him to be a good boy.

For a time Crumbs only looked at me sleepily and slept again; in the second stage he mumbled something, put his hand on my eyes, said "Kyin?" and slept serenely; but in the third stage Crumbs sat up, stared at me and said: "I'll be good. *Don't* ky. Don't lets nobody tare!"

Thus Crumbs formed the habit of waking regularly at two o'clock in the morning, a habit which prevailed for two years and more, which shows how much harm a woman can do if she tries. Long months after the horrid chimera of Crumbs in dreadful clothes with "no sun or moon, no morn, no noon," but always after that "November,"—when all this had left me, Crumbs still sat up in his bed each night, fully awake with his hands upon my breast, leaning over me to say: "I'll never take nuffin' of nobody's, so don't you cry!"

In time the assurance became mechanical, Crumbs immediately turning over and sleeping the sleep of the just, I nod-



ding at him half awake, in acknowledgment of his attentions, but on the whole he might have had a worse habit.

The "before the war" friend, who knew more or less of my problem, explained to me with considerable elaboration that it was folly to put such notions into a child's head. It was quite enough to make a thief of him, or if he couldn't become a thief, it was enough to "make him imaginative."

Well, Crumbs could not at the very best have been called unimaginative—imagination was an *original tendency* of the most opulent sort with him—so along that line I could not have done much harm. Besides, it was not any part of my business to kill his imagination, but rather to foster it and help him to imagine the right things. For the rest: I have never been able to decide whether that good friend was right or not, because after all, Crumbs formed a habit—in his sleep, as it was—of letting other people's things alone, so far as he

was able to distinguish between which was his, which mine, and which the exclusive property of others.

I am almost certain that in time he would have learned to know what a thief was, even if I had not told him; and if his initial acquaintance had been a nice gentlemanly, genial thief, Crumbs' love of good fellowship, which he so strongly developed later, might have made matters worse than did our early, post-midnight sessions. Given as a basis, love and a sense of comradeship, a boy may turn out to be almost anything from a bad thief to a good husband.

I have never desired to make Crumbs shudder, but since he must shudder more or less as he goes through life, I have always given the preference to the undesirable, rather than to the cold bath.

He grew to identify badness with thieves, with midnight tears and a close enfolding of his small body; and, finally, with the softest hours when he learned to think sorrowfully, rather than resent-

fully, of thieves. But there again, Crumbs' *original tendency* toward Original Sin stepped in and distracted me. A soft pity for wrong-doing was hardly suited to Crumbs' disposition. It worked both ways. Crumbs, himself, loved to be pitied, because that meant to him, though undefined, an element of sensuous happiness, a close folding of the arms about him and introspective conversations—and Crumbs thought himself quite well worth talking about. It meant ultimate love-feasts, and that reactionary happiness known only to ill-advised lovers who quarrel.

I surmised that Crumbs might be capable of taking the spring overcoat merely for the human love of pity and celebration. I ought then to leave out of his horizon the gentle quality of mercy, while I must initiate him into stern hatred of the doers, as well as the doings of evil. As I did not want him to go to gaol, I gave precedence to the latter method, and trusted the compromise to time and luck.

Crumbs grew merry or melancholy along such immoderate lines—but he loved me. He spurned his friends when he did not want them, but demanded their instant attention when he grew sociable; and as this seemed to me only another form of taking the spring overcoat, it became a detail to be looked after. Hence, I fell into being at Crumbs' command never at those times when he sought me. I frequently reminded him at such moments, that I then felt as he had felt the hour previously, when I had longed for him very much. It took a troublous season for the meaning of this to find its way to Crumbs' understanding, and it cost me considerable self-denial, because as a fact I was always ready for Crumbs, whether he wanted me or not. But in time he discovered that one secret of happiness was reciprocity, and that people frequently paid for happiness by making decent compromises as they went along.

It began thus, but later on, force of habit robbed such methods of directly selfish purpose, and fairness became as much the order of the day as luncheon was.

It saddened me to know that Crumbs was not exceptional, and that he did not love propriety of action for its own sake; but gradually I became so eternally thankful that he was decent for any reason whatever, that I forgot to experience regret. Still, Crumbs was born with the excessive advantage of being a loving chap; and maybe if he had not had me to bring up, while I was assisting him to form his character, he might have fared exceptionally well. His responsibility was somewhat greater than mine, because, if he did not early enough get me started in the way I should go for his best good, it was almost certain to kill me. Maybe it is good for a child, who must be continually occupied, to have the responsibility of his mother.

## CHAPTER IV

### BENDING THE TWIG

CRUMBS probably boasted a constitutional robustness, since he knew little illness that could be traced to a source, but there was a trick of sudden rises in temperature, of dark circles that suddenly made their appearance beneath his eyes, of quick-coming lassitudes, followed by surprising recuperation, and each phase bore the mark of actuality, was no pathological affection. These moments of abnormal physical mood became matters of continual nervous anxiety to me; and Crumbs' nonchalant watchword "Don't nobody tare!" frequently spoken with a grin and with whimsicality of tone, while his condition was febrile and obviously wrong, never helped me much.

Somebody one day whispered "regularity of habit," and I was impressed. Crumbs was not yet so nearly lost that he could not be redeemed; hence, in his second year we began to retire and to take sustenance along regular lines. Crumbs seemed to like that way as well as any other, but it made no difference whatever in his oft-recurring nervous tempers. I was an all-night worker, and when I did not work, neither could I sleep, hence it was my habit to encourage late rising in myself.

Those solicitous friends, who were patiently watching our swift retrogression, and who never doubted that I was taking Crumbs to perdition long before the time appointed of God, told me that early rising as well as early bedtime was the proper caper for all well-appointed children.

I reminded them that Crumbs was not well-appointed, and that frequently he mentioned in the night that he was "tryin' to sweep, but it aint no use and—



don't nobody tare!" I explained that I approved of late rising, if one could do it, but they assured me early rising would help to "appoint" him. Perhaps they were right; I never tried it. I believed that a very little and very active chap was not far enough advanced along the unwholesome way, either to experience or to affect laziness. I had fur-tively watched Crumbs suffer poignantly toward six o'clock in the morning, in his instinctive effort to keep still till I should open my eyes, and I did not believe he was going to fall down on the breakfast hour, as it were, unless he needed to.

Hence, it became understood between him and me, that nobody in all this world was ever to be awakened by either of us, unless that unfortunate person was going to take a train.

Now this matter of regularity, if quite unregulated, has its disadvantages; and hard and fast rules are about as unpleasant and unprofitable as hard and fast people. In time, a kind fate demon-

strated to me how much regularity was deadly to this special boy, and I was not bringing up any other boy—just Crumbs.

A night came when Crumbs said he felt that he could not go to bed. I did not know enough at that time to take him at his word, and I thought he could go to bed if he was helped. During the evening small complainings came to me from Crumbs' bed, and with the new consequentiality born of an approved purpose I replied tranquilly, decisively, sternly as the affair progressed. Crumbs suffered with resignation till ten o'clock, which must have been an eternity to him, and then he cursed me. He knew the words: there was the banana man at the corner, hoi polloi all about, and Crumbs always wide awake and receptive.

Rounded out cursings, full of vigour, hot from the griddle and coming from a little child are awesome things. Something helpfuller than the advice of regular and childless people counselled me to be silent.

It was a difficult night for Crumbs and me. Crumbs had risen from his bed, had stood before me, shrieked, called me names, then thrown himself upon the floor and kicked. His appearance was that of a dejected fiend—blue eyes gone black, and a purple face. When exhaustion came upon him, I laid him in his bed and lying beside him said, “we are tired, Crumbs; let’s you and I go to sleep.” So Crumbs slept with a cool cloth upon his head, instead of with a hot spot upon his anatomy—which I fancy would have been more regular but less helpful.

The next morning he slept late and awoke white and hollow-eyed, and that day I begged his pardon. I felt that I had been a bad mother to him and I said so. Crumbs was a gentleman, because in that hour, with my sins heavy upon me, he said: “You’re a good Muver—’n’ I’ll kill everybody. You’re kyin’,—Oh *don’t*, DON’T lets nobody tare!” his methods were crude but his feeling was

along the right lines. Thereafter, I frequently confessed my faults to Crumbs, but his chivalry never failed. Upon one such occasion an *original tendency*—love—for the moment got the better of him, but honesty prevailed, in the end, and he said with evident distress:

“I guess mebby you were bad because you just said ‘No, you can’t go,—don’t bover me,’ wifout thinkin’ it over. I guess mebby you were bad; but—don’t lets nobody tare.” So if honesty prevailed, yet love tempered another beautiful *original tendency*—a tendency to be honest in his own thought at the expense of my feelings.

After that night when regularity so miscarried, we were less well appointed; but I determined to save Crumbs, even at the expense of my friends’ approval. That night’s fearful exhibition marked time for us, and my imaginative excesses again took hold on me: I had witnessed another of Crumbs’ possibilities. Again he was twenty-five years old; it was no

longer a matter of the spring overcoat but of murder, and my sense of responsibility sorely afflicted me.

After Crumbs had recovered from the nervous exacerbation of that night, to him it was all as if it had never been; but to me the hour was for a long time present. His outbreak had been simply physical; he had made no childish objection to going to bed at the accustomed hour; he had been willing enough to sleep at the established time, but in the grasp of nervous irritation he only did not kill me because he could not.

To add to our troubles there rose upon our horizon the maiden lady without any nerves for other people, but a-plenty for herself; and the lady with the children who were too good to be true; and the man-friend with more good feeling than discretion who laughed when Crumbs' soul was in danger, and who said in Crumbs' presence: "He's a corker. He'll come out in the wash!" And the lady whose sons only awaited the coming

of the years when they should turn highwaymen; and the helpless lady who "doesn't know *what* to advise—she really doesn't!" Yes, she came also. All, all of these and more came between Crumbs and me, till finally we both felt we were fighting for each others very life.

Crumbs and I began to feel that we were not proper people, not fit for human society; and one day he said of a conscientious friend:

"I fink she don't wike me" (still short on l's) "I fink so because when I said 'hello!' she just wooked."

Crumbs was right. He had got himself disliked. I do not know how it made him feel at this period, but I know how I felt about it. I suspect it made him feel like going out and killing a policeman because he sniffed when he told me, and humped his shoulders in a way he had whenever he came in conjunction with his critics. There again was that *original tendency* toward resistance.

I suggested to him that possibly we

were not pleasant people to have much to do with, and I have always felt that at that moment Crumbs' loyalty helped to save the day.

"Folks'd better wike you er I'll fix 'em," he remarked, and the remark afforded me a desired opportunity. He and I had a talk, and it was decided that if I were to be made acceptable to others, he would have to labour in my interests. I expressed a doubt that I could be beloved of my own ability. I also expressed an inspired confidence in his ability to make people endure my presence for the sake of having his charming manners forever before them. I told him how to go about making this strictly true.

By Crumbs' third year we had fallen upon grave ways and pale misfortune: Crumbs' father had become an invalid, was no longer near us, and we felt there was an end of cakes and ale for us. I knew then that Crumbs and I were to grow up together as best we could. He



had long since made an impression on my original disposition, as I on his, and I believed there was hope for us both.

Crums and I had moved away from the house with the pastel nursery, the creatures in "natural colours" and the woven-in dog, and about the only thing we took along out of the wreck was the bath-tub with its garlands, that Crums might some day have his attention called to how flowers did not grow. I had learned to wish sometimes that Crums did not laugh, nor love, nor have his spiritual being from the inside out, but in some more superficial fashion.

We began anew and pretty much all alone, a short-handed, half-crippled *ré-gime*, but Crums was a great moral stimulant. When I looked sad, he looked sadder, would have a fever, or indigestion; hence it became my habit to look sad only when I had entered into my closet and shut the door. This habit of smiling for the baby was more potent than "coughing for the lady," and after a

while I found myself looking superficially pleasant, even in the closet behind closed doors. If this Sunny-Jim habit had its drawbacks, it had its advantages: being expected to frivol for my friends, I found it after all better to laugh than be sighing.

Yes, during this transition period Crumbs got himself disliked. He had no manners but bad ones, and this was my fault, not his. We were mostly alone, save for a maid-of-all-work, and my occupation distracted my thoughts from those details of conduct which Crumbs had a right to expect me to attend to for him. He frequently took his meals alone, and when we were together the joy of listening to his chatter was so great that in the absence of all cause to silence him, I permitted him to chatter on. It was harmless enough in itself, yet deadly, because we could not always be alone. When Crumbs began to get us disliked, and we entered into secret session to discuss the matter, he

suggested that we go "way off somewhere where they's just dogs. 'n' do everything what we wikes."

This was a serious matter. I beheld the soil in which misanthropy should one time sprout. Instead of less of human society and more of dogs', C umbs must have more of the former, because, like someone else, the more he saw of men the better he liked dogs.

Nobody but full-grown robustious men really wanted Crumbs. He had become a horror to women, and the surprises he continually had in store for them got on their nerves. He talked too much; he was 'fresh,' he told me the janitor said, and it seemed to me that the janitor was a man of judgment. He could only get on with men, and a particular sort at that.

This was first revealed to me just before his fifth birthday, while we were in the country. There his intimate was the skipper of his uncle's sailing boat. Crumbs greatly enjoyed the man's society

and the skipper was good enough to tolerate Crumbs; indeed I think he had almost as good a time out of the friendship thus established as Crumbs had. Among other things he taught Crumbs to spell phonetically. The skipper was good natured; but one unfortunate day, when I had begun to feel that something must happen to Crumbs and happen quick—something of a nature that women cannot do, or that they do not know how to do—on that day, I was sitting not far from where the boat lay anchored and Crumbs and his friend were aboard her. I inferred that the man was trying to find repose in the heat of the day, while Crumbs had a high-noon vitality that interfered.

All I heard of the session was from the skipper:

“Now don’t you get fresh, young man, or I’ll just naturally chuck you overboard,” and the tone implied business. Crumbs was unused to such treatment. Most people handled him

gently in deference to me, but also, they mostly avoided me at those times when Crumbs was not asleep, and he was almost never asleep any more. That hot July day as I sat within earshot of the boat, my presence unrevealed, I hoped that one man was going to be as good as his word. I felt that action from such a source, without other animus than the man's determination to maintain his right to be let alone at certain times, would help us back into the straight and narrow way. The silence of surprise followed the threat, and then Crumbs jeered, aggressively.

It was all over in a minute. One splash was followed by another and yet another, and then I beheld Crumbs standing in the trailer, very wet, very much surprised and somewhat choked. While being set ashore, he did not enter into conversation, but rid himself of the superfluous water that had entered his system as best he could, and without any help from his practical friend. I had

time to get home before Crumbs was well on his way from the dock.

I waited developments and they arrived with Crumbs. He trailed into the house wet, thoughtful and looking foolish.

"What's *œdema*?" he asked. I said, "Why?"

"That's what I got—the doctor waffed and said so." He had encountered the village physician on his way home. Even drowning could not separate Crumbs and his curiosity.

"Did you fall into the water, Crumbs? Oh, my!" I cut the water-logged knot in his shoe-strings. Crumbs gasped out something that might have meant anything while I wrung the water out of his pants.

"My darling child! To think you might have been drowned!"

"No I mightn't."

"Why—to fall into the water like this—"

"Didn't fall in; chucked—damn it! Didn't say nuffin,'" he added hurriedly,

while he became as much too red as he had been too white. He did not have the habit of bad language. I looked my disapproval, and he muttered again: "Didn't say nuffin'," and squirmed his toes.

"How did you get into the water?" I rough-towelled him.

"Billy chucked me!"

"I shall see Billy the minute I get dry clothes on you. I'll see what he means by this." Crumbs furtively regarded me, but was silent. With the last button of a dry suit of clothes, he said:

"I fink I don't want you to see what Billy means by this; he's awful!"

"I shall call him to account at once," I said and started for the door. Then Crumbs frantically clutched my hand:

"You'd better not bover Billy."

"Did you bother him?"

"Well—he just chucked me—'n' didn't say nuffin'." Thus Billy accomplished more in one hot, mid-day minute than I had been able to accomplish in the



three months of our ostracism. Yet Crumbs would rather have pleased me than Billy; but the outlook was brand-new to him. All life now presented the aspect of a ducking if he should continue to impose upon people—some people; and evidently he would not be able to tell just which people were safe. The incident was marked with good results for many a day; indeed, Crumbs never again returned entirely to his old methods. I passed Billy in the road later in the day and Crumbs was with me. Crumbs looked away, but Billy and I looked at each other—as Greek Augurs used to do, I dare say.

The season developed new troubles every week. Crumbs was born with a capacity to see all sides of a question; an intellectual faculty upon which to build as on a rock; but also, he was born with a fixed determination to acknowledge no side but his own, and this reduced his rock foundation to shifting sand.

There was the efficient intelligence to

appeal to, but likewise a temperamental obstinacy to be overcome.

His was that mental condition which goes to render the dialectician invincible: he could perceive with his peculiar flash-light intelligence, the strong points of another's argument, and thus prepare to meet them by strengthening the weak points of his own.

## CHAPTER V

### INDIRECT METHODS

**I**N his third year, when Crumbs and I were first left to our own devices, the demand for moral invention on my part became oppressive. Necessity again proved herself a mother, and upon this occasion she brought forth twins. Somebody gave Crumbs a cat and a dog. The cat died young, much to my satisfaction, but the dog lived to fulfill his mission.

The dog was a good deal like the woven-in dog, and had as many different kinds of breed as New England is supposed to have weather, but it passed for a fox terrier. In recognition of Crumbs' inherent sporting proclivities, I had the mutt's tail docked, named him Mulvaney and hoped for the best. Crumbs already knew Mulvaney in his literary place,

more or less—those portions of him that could be turned to account best, just before bedtime, when I was expected to “fink of somethin’.” Many of the things I thought of under these circumstances, elicited the characteristic “don’t nobody tare!” which was Crumbs politest way of letting me down easy when I fell short of the mark. But Mulvaney had always found favour. Hence, Mulvaney for the dog.

Being a nervous person, much occupied and preoccupied and not over-fond of live-stock under foot, the impulse to cuff the dog for its persistence in wrong-doing was strong within me, but this impulse gave way to the fear of arousing in Crumbs some untrained, unnatural impulse to cuff his finest fate. Thus I fell to reasoning with the dog, and it is surprising how like an obsession this love of ratiocination may become. It is the vanity in us: one runs on and on, drunk with one’s high-flown capacity.

I noticed that if I reasoned with Mul-

vaney only in Crumbs' presence, and cuffed him on the other side of the door, I was likely to fall from the moral tight-rope I found it necessary to walk; and thus in time, as a matter of precaution, I found myself becoming almost as reasonable a being as I wished Crumbs to become.

Bye and bye, the terrier became a great educational medium for his master. By a method of indirection I managed to present certain problems of conduct to Crumbs without hurting his feelings, and without greatly crippling the dog. For instance, when the dog mutilated a folio of music I first reasoned with him, in Crumbs' presence, upon his lack of self-control. I pointed out to him that wrong doing inevitably brought punishment, and further to demonstrate my point I took Mulvaney out and scientifically cuffed him. Thus, I made Crumbs, through the dog, understand a good many things: how essential it was for a dog—possibly a person—to learn self-

control in the interests of himself and society.

All little children, even those of average intelligence, love to listen, if facts be made to appear picturesque or dramatic to them, and in their conduct they invariably reflect what they have observed. It would have been impossible for me to keep in hand another human being thus to serve as a daily moral example to Crumbs; impossible, even if it would not have been truly degrading to Crumbs to witness the correction of another in all respects like himself. But a dog, a good, self-sacrificing dog like Mulvaney, was amenable. Crumbs loved the dog and could be made to feel his own responsibility for Mulvaney's good conduct.

Thus it fell out that Crumbs not infrequently evolved certain ethical notions of his own, by no means unworthy, if unique, and these he imparted to Mulvaney for Mulvaney's betterment. In short, the dog became a medium by which I might continually put before his

master much that it was good for him to know of generosity, of kindness, of justice and of good sense. The cur-dog provided a sort of moral atmosphere most helpful to Crumbs and me.

It was not always restful nor convenient to devote so much time to a small cur-dog, even though the results were all for his master; but it was as restful as any other method of living up to a son's future glory through his present well-being.

Seven years is none too much time, if improved without ceasing, in which to discover a child's tendencies toward Original Sin and Original Saintliness; to overcome or neutralise the former, or to strengthen the latter. Fully as close attention and application are required in making a child's character, as in making a cake. In the one case, the comestible can be purveyed by the baker, while the commodity of character, which may be traded upon, though neither bought nor sold, is the mother's own affair and re-

sponsibility, assuming that she has not brought into the world a child with a moral lesion.

If one takes her responsibility toward her children and society seriously enough, she will grow to regard all the conveniences of an up-to-date civilisation as existing directly, and for the single purpose of her own child's development. When the itinerant "mender"—one of civilisation's new glories—comes in on Saturday, it gives woman a new, systematised vacation of a few hours for the good of her children. The ready service of a luxurious civilisation adds half a day to her twenty-four hours; thus again Fate has given to her children additional opportunities through their mother. One may "have in" everything but a mother. One may "have in" intelligence, specialised ability, general knowledge, discretion, precise care, but one may not "have in" the one element that makes the application of all else certain and advantageous. One may not "have in" that confidence



which exists between all women and their children unless one party or the other be abnormal. The application of Maternal Science depends less upon a woman's intellectual capacity than upon her amount of patience and self-control. Almost any woman can be inventive enough to suit any child's requirements, if she has the will and the spiritual strength. Almost any woman can be a successful mother if she begins by recognising that her child is an individual, and regards him as an item, rather than as the total.

I knew a little child, accounted the stupidest of his race, because for a month of Sundays his mother and teacher had travailed to make him understand that one apple and one apple made two apples. To him "one apple and one apple makes one apple," and for many months he could not help it. Maybe he cannot now, although that was ten years ago. Upon one occasion when his mother was proclaiming him

hopeless I heard that little boy exonerate himself forever—at least in my eyes.

“Do you know, Johnnie, if you will not learn that one apple and one apple makes two apples you will grow up to be just like those men who are digging that drain out there. You simply can’t be anything different. You’ll have to dig drains and make roads and carry bricks all of your life.”

“Well,” said Johnnie, to whom one apple and one apple made one apple, “*somebody* has to do it.” The light of patience and good intentions, and wonderment was in Johnnie’s face as he spoke. It seemed to me that though one apple and one apple should forever and ever make one apple to Johnnie, it was just possible that Johnnie might evolve a good working text book on economics, or something of that kind. I felt a good deal sorrier for Johnnie’s mamma at that moment than I did for Johnnie. She had no intimate acquaintance with Johnnie, and probably never would have till

he began to teach her what a very nice, practical, helpful son she had.

If a woman cannot afford to take advantage of a new-fangled system of living, there is nothing for it but to convert her Saturday mending into an illuminated missal, while infancy plays at soldiers by the fireplace, and bivouacs on the woven-in dog. At least, she may enroll herself in the ambulance corps, and pretend to be making bandages for the soldier over by the fireplace, who has been wounded in the service of his country.

A child may not be intellectually brilliant, but he can learn his letters, if someone will take time to focus his mind on building blocks, alphabetically constructed. The attention once attracted, mental assimilation follows. While the mind is still inchoate, building blocks do more than the primer for a child who is stupid or otherwise. Then why not have a kindergarten system for the attractive presentation of morals?

Crumbs' system and mine was irregular, and it kept one of us alert for devices night and day. Our conduct of this general plan was along no predestined line. As in the matter of the dog, it was generally an expedient that happened to suggest itself.

I could say to the dog, when Crumbs was about to take the clock to pieces: "I shall be sorry, Mulvaney, if you take that clock apart; I shall have to punish you and I guess it will about make me sick." Inevitably the clock stayed in its accustomed resting place, inviolated.

This idea worked its way into Crumbs' system in a fashion which made it seem to him an entirely natural process, but about his fourth year he began to watch me out of the tail of his eye as I talked, and he would depart without committing the offense, yet with a new manner. Then the inevitable day came when he grinned, while I continued to harangue Mulvaney to no purpose. The result was that Mulvaney for once got the conversation,

while Crumbs got what was coming to him, after he had placed a loaf of bread stuck full of pins upon my dressing table.

Crumbs tried to argue the matter with me, when he could draw his attention from the seat of selection, but he did so to no special purpose, except that we more completely understood each other. His argument was all right, in its prehistoric way, but mine was more up-to-date. He pointed out to me that he had not grinned defiantly, but because he had known that I was admonishing Mulvaney for something he neither could do nor had done, and he thought it a good joke on Mulvaney. I suggested a new interpretation, and proved beyond question that the joke was on Crumbs. He had long been awake to my generous subterfuge, and had not only taken advantage of me, but, what was worse, had taken advantage of Mulvaney, permitting him to stand for Crumbs' sins after Crumbs had developed a sense of per-

sonal responsibility. The time had come when his development could progress without further injury to Mulvaney's feelings, and it was about this period that Mulvaney began to stand for Crumbs' moral appendix as it were—no longer useful, though still a part of the structure.

I began continually to point out to Crumbs, that love which in a dog passeth understanding. The dog had borne the burden of his master's sins, while yet his master was too young to be taught by anything more strenuous than example.

Before Crumbs or Mulvaney knew, there grew up between them a new-dressed religious era, in which chivalry and self-sacrifice played their usual parts, and Crumbs went upon all-fours, so to speak, at Mulvaney's call. It didn't matter much to Mulvaney—Crumbs' new thought—and not much more to Crumbs just then; but long afterward, when Crumbs began to learn the relations of

things and people to each other, I found that the episode had its place.

We conducted a good deal of life on the "sposen" plan, Crumbs and I. One of the most diverting "sposen" occasions that I now recall was an impromptu play, which grew out of a morning's distraction, when he and I were in the hands of the maid-of-all-work, when the tradespeople failed to arrive on time, when I had a business appointment at the far end of town, and an acquaintance stopped in to lunch. In that oppressive hour, Crumbs was in the way and he resented the exigencies of the situation. For the time being he was effaced from the scene, while I struggled to bring order out of chaos.

Time in which to take breath came the following day, and I proposed then to Crumbs that we should have a "sposen" time, somewhat after the fashion of yesterday's reality. He was to be I. He was to do all the things that I had done—including the ordering of me out

of his way—I being Crumbs. This met with Crumbs' idea of a good time, and he proceeded to say:

"How do you do, Mrs. Blank," while I shook hands and filled in somewhat after the following fashion:

"That's right, 'How do you do,'"—shaking hands with Crumbs. Then, in my proper person: "Remember! There isn't a thing in the house to eat, Crumbs! You were going to have luncheon downtown. You have to go to the city, because your little son's living somewhat depends on it. I'm your little son, you know. Margaret does not know how to do anything but keep people from carrying off the place, and nobody wants to carry off the place. Go over there in the corner. That chair is Margaret. Ask her if the butcher has come with the meat for dinner. If he has, you will have to use the dinner meat for luncheon, you know. No, no! You can't go off like that. Here! You must first say: 'Will you excuse me for a moment Mrs.



Blank?' Oh here! Come back here! Not like that—not as if your mind were on the butcher. Take plenty of time—be reposeful—don't hurry till you are out of the room—the rug's the doorway—that's right!

"Excuse me Mrs. Blank."

"There! Now you are on the other side of the door—skedaddle!—Remember, the butcher didn't come! Margaret must go for something. What? Oh, you will have to think that up. Bear in mind that she cannot remember a blessed thing. You'll have to stop and write out a list. Don't forget anything. Of course you haven't a pencil—you must look for one—don't forget Mrs. Blank. You mustn't forget her—Don't let her suspect there is nothing in the house to eat—or that you were going out. Hurry, hurry! You must get to the telephone and call up oooo Nemo, and fix that engagement of yours—or you wont be able to pay the butcher on your little boy's account to-

morrow!—bill's just come in! there, on the desk!—You must remember that you are the mother as well as the father of a family now.

There!—The butcher is at the elevator! Run!—that's it—the piano bench is the elevator!—Think what you want to order—and remember that Mrs. Blank thinks by this time you run your house in a very irregular fashion—also your little boy—I'm your little boy, and I'm turning Mulvaney's ears wrong-side out and making him growl! Mrs. Blank is right in thinking you are a very irregular housekeeper and mother and everything:—so you are—you can't help it! I—your little boy—was coughing with his cold all last night, and you—my mother—were about the place giving me all sorts of things for it, and asking if I felt chilly and if I was covered up—don't feel perfectly fit yourself, to-day! Mrs. Blank cannot possibly know all about it however; she has troubles of her own—probably has come to tell you of them!

They are different from yours, that is all! Come! Be nice to me! I am Mrs. Blank. Go to the 'phone and ring up oooo Nemo;—now say something that will tell to Mrs. Blank that you had an important engagement, and that you mean to break it because you wish to be here with her."

Crumbs, at piano bench telephoning: "Mrs. Blank 's here an' I can't come. I'm awful sorry."

"Oh my goodness *no!* That is true, but it would hurt Mrs. Blank's feelings. Something different. Oh, I can't tell. How can your little boy tell? He didn't tell me yesterday. He just raised Cain all the time I was trying to think! You'll have to think of the right thing. Something different!—You *can't!*—Well you'll *have* to!—I couldn't either, yesterday, but I did.—That is a part of your business if you are I, and I am Mrs. Blank and am here for lunch.

"'Say—Mama!' (Now, I'm your little boy). 'I'm going to take my engine over in the park an' I'm going *now!*'"

"Now you mustn't let me do it because I'll get run over when I cross the tracks on Eighth Avenue: I'm just a little boy." (Crums began to giggle.) "'Well, I'm going to!—see if I don't!'"

"Here you are letting me go!—Grab me by the shoulder and say 'Walk into that room this instant—and don't you put your feet in Mrs. Blank's lap nor make ridiculous sounds nor faces—and don't you say another word about the park or that engine—or I'll spank you!' Hurry and say that to me now!—and then I'll go and pull Mulvaney's stump-tail in front of Mrs. Blank, and look smart—to see if she notices what a wonder I am! And Mrs. Blank will think I have a nice kind of a mother.—Margaret's taking the romaine out of the water and putting it in the bowl without drying it!—rush!—stop her!—Talk a little to Mrs. Blank as you go into the hall so she will think your mind is at rest.—Now, here!—I'm Mrs. Blank!—Hurry! the salad!—Don't turn round and round like that—the salad's

over there!—Don't forget the telephone—say something through it that will make Mrs. Blank go before lunch: you are half crazy!—Say something that will make her go, yet will not make her think you regret she came.—You really do not regret it—but it is necessary for you to keep your appointment—you are a working woman and have to work spry or something will happen to your little boy. I'm your little boy.—You love me better than any thing in the world.—Now your little boy is making a ticket-chopper of the inside blinds—and using a letter off the desk for his tickets,—and there might as well be a cheque inside that letter as not, if your mother was anybody on earth but your mother—You must come here and stop me.—You *must* think of the right thing to say over the 'phone.—Think about that all the time you are doing everything else—you'll get an idea after a while—your mother does sometimes! Now I am Mrs. Blank:

“‘Oh, you have an engagement? Now don’t think of breaking it. I only ran in for a minute anyway. Lunch? Oh, I couldn’t—going to the children’s club—they discuss how to bring up mothers, I believe. Crumbs doesn’t belong?—No! Really! Now I should think—

“She’s gone! Run tell Margaret to go down and stop the oysterman—oysters wont be fit for dinner if they send them up now. No—she’ll mix things! You’ll have to ring up oooo Nemo again and say you are coming and then stop on your way to the car and tell the oyster people yourself. Hurry—hurry—hurry! Can’t you remember the telephone is the piano bench? the elevator is the—oh goodness!—oh——”

By this time Crumbs was prostrate and shouting with joy and excitement.

This was his favourite “sposen” game, till he became fairly expert in doing everything in sight with lightning rapidity; and all possible variants were rung into the performance. We worked the

drama up to a climax each time till finally, one day, Crumbs sat down winded, and remarked that it was lots of fun,—‘but you get awful tired.’ Then it was my time to mention that his mother often thought so too,—and that his wife would think so frequently; and I have had Crumbs living up to his wife ever since.

Crumbs learned several things by this game of “’sposen.” He learned to keep his wits about him, learned to get the mechanism of his mind going, and in time he interpolated a good deal of action on his own account.

What I couldn’t think of in the line of distractions, he could. He learned to be fairly discreet, and at the same time to appreciate the necessity for sincerity with Mrs. Blank and those whom she represented. “’Sposen” times, like Mulvaney, became one of our valued expedients.

It is so much better for a child to “’sposen” the decencies of life than to

occupy himself with unpleasing actualities.

I intend that Crumbs shall learn to cook a dinner of six courses; just an everyday, decently prepared dinner, such as he will expect his wife to serve to him one day; or such as she should wish to serve to him, if he cannot provide the service and the viands too. It will be the worse for her if she must try to make him believe that he has dined, after she has made soup out of chicken's feet, and a *pièce de resistance* out of the ghost of Sunday's roast. He shall learn, if I keep him at it till he is twenty-one. By that time he will have added several things to his curriculum—how to cook a dinner (and the chemistry of dining is no bad thing for a man to know)—and how much to be revered the cook is. Incidentally, he will not be too critical some day when the roast is overdone.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE QUESTION OF OBEDIENCE

THERE are a lot of things that make for good morals which a child may learn as its mother goes along, but the mother cannot waste any time. The economy of time is one of the most important things on earth when one has only seven years in which to get a man or woman started, and started right. A woman, herself, will acquire a deal of higher education in the process, and by the time she is fifty, she can take it to mothers' clubs, where she can compare notes with other mothers of the same age. That is about all a mothers' club can amount to—a place for the comparison of notes after a woman's children have cast their first votes or had their first babies. Up to that time she hasn't

any leisure in which to tell anybody but her children what to do. It keeps an intelligent mother on the tightrope a large part of her life—this effort to help her children to happiness—but some women think it pays.

Crums was elemental, therefore as full of the spirit of experiment as any other boy, and it would have been as effectual to tell him to turn black as to tell him to be good. Arbitrary statements do not specially appeal to children; not even the arbitrary statement that they must obey. Children must obey, but they are going to know why they must, else they will obey without good to their souls and with considerable detriment to their intelligence. Obedience is only half the proposition, and the weakest half at that. The desire to obey means that the child has arrived.

Crums never did obey in the fashion of the martinet, but the spirit of obedience was his after he found out the part obedience played in the economy of love

and opportunity. His illumination came about in the usual irregular fashion.

Since Crumbs and I were mostly company for each other, and enjoyed each other's society immensely, it was my habit always to put my desires in the form of requests, and invariably to thank him for his services. As a creature of habit, I never have laid aside this unseemly method of request and thanks—not even after being criticised by those who had “never heard of such a thing in *my* time. In *my* time, when children were told to do a thing they did it, and that was the end of it.” It was generally only the beginning of it with Crumbs and me, yet we got on very well, till we had a visitor who frequently reverted to the ancient, unmannerly order of things.

She was a kind, gentle-minded person, withal, if somewhat austere in her methods, and the first I knew of Crumbs' delinquencies was when a froward voice said:

"Don't you fank boys when they do fings for you?"

After this Crumbs and I talked together. I pointed out to him that there were other ways than ours; ways as worthy, if different. I tried to explain the part which intention plays in all things; but this illustration happened later, when Crumbs learned something of the proper classification of people. It was not a thing which I was able, arbitrarily, to teach him. I had to wait till the time came when his intellect could be helped out by actual personal demonstration. That was how Crumbs learned everything.

But I began to perceive that, on the whole, Crumbs would have to learn to obey without questioning. After the process of obedience began, he continued for many days to ask "Why?" and I could hardly blame him. I, too, always liked to know why. Then, one day the gas-log apparatus was changed in Crumbs' absence and the new arrange-

ment had some drawback. It was necessary to use the gas-lighter in starting it because the combustion was imperfect, but the log could be used before it was entirely adjusted, if proper care were taken.

When Crumbs returned home he was cold, and according to custom he began to light the log as he had lighted the former one. I spoke sharply to him from the next room, as he was in the act of striking a match, and by the time he had asked "why" he found himself a good way off, with portions of the stove.

It was a costly and hazardous way to teach a child the value of obedience, but since it did not kill him and his eyebrows grew again, it paid. If I, myself, had realised the value of arbitrary command and obedience, Crumbs would have learned his lesson, not less impressively but long before, with less danger and along the line of the least resistance.

The accident was my opportunity, and I did not ignore it. I made it plain forever that I was in no way trying to impose upon his intelligence or good nature; that there might frequently be times when I could not explain, yet when obedience would be valuable to him; that he had just had this demonstrated; that no one could contract the habit of instant obedience without practice; therefore it would be necessary for him to begin at once to obey without exception; to obey on the instant, and—that was “WHY?” I had supplied, or accident had, the reason why he should obey, and Crumbs, being a reasonable sort, liked the idea very well indeed, and we did not delay beginning the new game.

He still asked “why?” and I pointed to the gas-log if we were within sight of it; or maybe I remarked that it took his eyebrows a long time to grow. At such times Crumbs just giggled; later, he grinned and obeyed; and, finally, he obeyed with mechanical precision; but

I never could forgive myself for my own shortcoming. The way of obedience should have been discussed about his sixth month when he had a colic from over-eating, against my best judgment.

If a woman lives but to avert the consequences of misconduct from her children (and if she has any children she has no time to live for anything else) she must provide horrible examples for them right along;—examples made dramatic, interesting and impressive; and she must have tact enough not to reveal that she has turned preceptress.

I am assuming that the mother knows that love which passeth understanding. There will never be a text-book on "Motherhood Made Easy" that will be a good working model. Motherhood, wide awake and doing something all the time is the only motherhood that will turn out anything worth having had. With cause and effect continually before a child from the

time he can sit up and take notice, a woman is certain to establish in such a child, a continual capacity for independent and intelligent thought. Lacking this power of comparison and reflection, another child, who has had the conditions of life passed before the sensitive plate of his mind without explanation of the relations of things, will fall off the roof—with no profounder purpose than to see how it seems.

Crums eventually became inordinately proud of his instantaneous obedience; I learned this from a conversation I overheard.

"I obey right off immediuntly, now," he offered, with a deal of pride in his achievement. "First off I didn't, but *now!* Why I just don't know I'm doin' it; I can do it bully."

His *vis à vis* could not understand Crums' point of view. The key to that was known only to my son and myself. Crums had been treated always as an individual, not as an oyster. The acquaintance said:



"Of course you obey. I'm sure you do, nice boy like you."

"I'm not a nice boy; the janitor says so. And I don't obey to be nice," Crumbs frowned. He was always impatient of stupidity; he learned patience later.

"What? You don't want to be a nice boy?"

"Yes—but I can't. I'm just telling you that I obey—right off."

"Didn't you always obey?"

"Why?"

"Because you owe it to your mother to obey."

"I don't owe my muver anyfing. We just owe th' grocery man." This was not strictly true because we also owed the butcher.

"What, you do not owe your dear mother obedience? Don't say such a thing. It pains me to hear little boys speak in that manner."

"If you're sick it's too bad, but don't you say I owe my muver anyfing."

Crumbs scowled. "You bet my muver and I wove each other awful. We don't owe each other anyfing. We just wove each other. We owe the grocery man." Crumbs had made so fine and beautiful a distinction that I could not hope to help him do better.

He had got down to the basic principles of human and emotional classification, unaided by anything but his own clear sight. He had heard the word "owe" in relation to the groceryman doubtless; but it was certain that he had never heard of it in its extraordinary application to the "give and take" of affection

"I do obey," Crumbs persisted, endeavouring to enlighten the woman who conceived some queer, alien obligation on the part of children to their parents. "I obey because my muver says its good sense—an' it is, because I didn't, and th' gas blew me sky-high." Crumbs' language from infancy had always been more picturesque than elegant.

"You should not need any reasons for obeying your mother. I do not like to hear little boys speak as you do."

"Yes, I do need reasons—for everything."

"Don't you think your mother knows what is best for you."

"Well," said Crumbs, trying to think impartially, "she might be mistaken. She has been sometimes, because she told me so." Crumbs spoke truthfully as usual.

Upon all propositions of do and dare, we consulted when it was practicable: it helped Crumbs and it helped me. He never obeyed less willingly, promptly and proudly because he didn't "owe" me anything. Later, Crumbs told me of this conversation.

"*She* said I owed you something; do I?"

"Well, not that I know of, Crumbs. I believe I am in your debt about three cents, since you helped me to make change for the shell-fish man, last week. I shall pay it this minute. I should have done so before."

"Oh you needn't bover about that. I wasn't talkin' about owin' because, because—" Crumbs' gentlemanly instincts were apparent, but he did not as yet know precisely the way to express them.

"Why did she say I owed somefing? I finked about the free cents, but I wouldn't tell *her*." He spoke with scorn. He had begun to mention his mature friends as "Her" and "She," a form which always marked his disapprobation.

"I will tell you,"—I always explained such heresies as I could, lest Crumbs learn less acceptably from some other source. "There are people who believe that little children owe something or other. I, myself, do not know precisely what, but they are supposed to *owe* something to their fathers and mothers, because of the care parents are expected to give their children." Crumbs was deeply interested: it was a new point of view, this classification of parents with tradespeople.

"Owe 'em money?" he asked, uneasily: "I shan't have any money for a long time, shall I?"

"Not if I keep borrowing of you, Crumbs, which is really a great shame—"

"No it isn't. I wikes you to borrow—but it isn't borrowing—it's just the same as yours—my fings—just as your fings are mine."

"Maybe that is the better way to look at it. But I'll try to deal fairly."

"Do children owe 'em money?"

"No, some people think their children owe them love and kindness and honour and—oh a lot of things." Crumbs was visibly swelling.

"Bu-u-u-b-u-t——" Crumbs always stammered like his mother when he became agitated.

"I *do* wove you 'n' be kind to you—aren't I?" And I don't know what's honour——" Crumbs was becoming tearful and angry and altogether disturbed.

"You do love me and are kind to me,

just as surely as you live!" I told him. The more I discussed the matter, the more dangerously near to Crumbs' own condition I became.

"But—that's not *owin'* things. *I can't help it!*"

I tried to explain that he need not try to help it, that he could never owe me anything in all his life; that as between mother and son, we took no account of benefits; that if there were obligations between us, they were on my side; that if it were not my dearest privilege to live for him all the time, we might then open a debit and credit side in Humanity's account; that I alone was responsible that he lived and had a mind to make or to destroy; that he should experience happiness or despair as the case should prove me to have been capable or otherwise; that the great problem of human obligation began and ended with his love for me and mine for him; and at last, if he were not good enough to be happy all his life, it would kill me.

I do not know how much of this Crumbs understood, but I know that the last words of the peroration were mighty to him, and I fancy neither of us quite forgot our discussion of another woman's well-meaning but badly aborted philosophy.

Thus, even the assininities of our friends often served us. We learned to turn almost everything to account soon or late.

## CHAPTER VII

### A CURE FOR THE TANTRUMS

THE slight impression which forces and facts make upon a child, unless he had found in them a personal application, was brought to my mind, and cost me one dollar and sixty-five cents one morning when Crumbs was five years old. In infancy the dangers of burning had been fended from Crumbs until the instinct of self-preservation sufficed to protect him. Afterward, the full potency of fire never had been borne in upon him. I do not know how it happened to be that the knowledge came to him so tardily, but, as a matter of fact, fire was one of the things of which Crumbs at five years of age, still had an impersonal knowledge. The gas-log episode had served merely as a sign-board to the way of Obedience.



On the occasion when fire became a fact to him he had wetted a new pair of shoes. It was early morning, and before I was out of bed, he had come to me to ask what he should do to dry them. I told him what to do, being at the time about half awake; then I dismissed the incident till he returned to say that they had told him below if he put his shoes on the stove he would burn them up. He had left them there, however, because I had told him to, and he guessed I knew "better'n they did."

This was a mistake. I had directed him differently, but he had misunderstood me, and his shoes were cooking on a hot stove griddle. Before they were rescued, the soles were burned completely off.

Certain members of the family suggested that he be thrashed. Crumbs had been whipped by me a few times in his life, but not so often that it had ceased to be an episode of importance. About this time I had begun to think I

should never thrash Crumbs again—greatly to the disappointment and disapproval of those about me, who believed in obligation on the part of children toward their parents—the notion so distrusted and despised by Crumbs and me.

When Crumbs burned his shoes, I believed that I could turn the incident to better account than a whipping, even if Crumbs had been at fault, which he was not. At our *tête à tête* breakfast, on the morning of the tragedy of the shoes, Crumbs first got fixed within him the relation of heat to things—his things—incidentally, everything. I found that he had never before realised what heat meant in the economy of cookery.

This seems incredible stupidity on the part of a five-year-old child, perhaps, but then Crumbs had a great many things to think about. It was all he could do to absorb facts as they came along, and absorb them *rightly*. When he saw a parade in the street he had to know the

reason for it, also the reason for the reason. When he was in the sea, having the time of his life, and his teeth began to chatter while he still "felt warm," he had to know the reason for coming back to dry land. This compelled him to learn a few basic facts about his circulation. Yes, Crumbs' busy day was all the time, and it so happened that he had not till now got so far as the subject of fire.

Now he learned that that which would cook meat would also put his shoes out of commission; and *en passant*, he absorbed some facts about leather; which would help him to judge in future years if his man were capable; or it would enable him to make one pair of shoes do the work of two, by reason of his own care.

Crumbs knew a good deal about fire and leather by the time we had breakfasted. I had the satisfaction of knowing that he was more or less comforted, and that the blow of having caused me extra expense and trouble was softened to

him. Nevertheless, my own nervous system and his being so inextricably involved, we reacted upon each other, even under the most favourable circumstances. This particular morning I had been none too "fit" at the outset, and the incident of the shoes had not improved Crumbs' temper nor emotions.

He knew perfectly well what it cost to buy a pair of shoes—not in dollars, but in effort on somebody's part. His grief had been diverted across the breakfast table; but still he was on edge. About this time Mulvaney committed some doggy crime for which he had to be punished. I was not fit to punish a dog that morning. My own inclination was towards excess, and I should have punished even Crumbs, wickedly. Hence I handed the dog over to the man-about-the-place, who had no nerves, presumably, and he did have a great deal of discretion about dogs. Then followed one of those dire, explosive moments which revealed all the *original sin* in an

ordinarily—perhaps an extraordinarily—good boy. Crumbs reviled me.

He called me a cruel woman, a wicked woman, the kind “who would shoot more birds ’n’ she wanted, just because.”

This was the extreme of vituperation with him. It referred to one of those unsportsmanlike crimes reviled by his father, and the detestation of which was absorbed by Crumbs in his earliest moments of understanding. He had taken it in as he had sat beside his father while gun-cleaning was in progress; when he watched his father from the wagon in the fields; when he, while no more than three years old, remained *en caché* in the blind beside his father; when he pulled the trigger while his father sighted for him. In short, the ethics of field and stream, the peculiar humanities of the gunner, the love of nature that is like the love of nature known to no other—the love that sees the grass grow and finds elation in the drum-

ming of a pheasant's wings, emotion in the rippling of a stream—all these things were Crumbs' heritage; and on that eventful morning when I handed Mulvaney over to be whipped, I was the "cruellest woman"—I'd shoot more birds than I wanted, just because!

The assembled family regarded me with amazement and disapproval because I spoke no word, but appeared to find interest in the morning paper. Unless I had chosen to kill Crumbs, I could not have stopped him. At that moment death had no terrors for him, neither had anyone's disapproval. If I had spoken, I should have given an importance to the situation which it deserved, and which couldn't at that moment have been safely given.

Also, I should have become unfitted for any further responsibility the rest of the day. The frightful cursings and revilements of Crumbs were giving me nausea and vertigo; and I knew that salvation lay in the morning paper.

Crums had before now, with regret but with reasonableness, witnessed the unavoidable punishment of Mulvaney. He loved me. He knew that I was not cruel. He would have died for me, but nothing except the grave would have stopped him at that moment. He had run amuck. He had temporarily lost his mind. Altogether, our condition of hysteria was mutual, and I had the advantage of Crums by several years. Surely the most exacting of judges might have considered Crums' handicap of extreme youth.

It seemed to me that if age, experience and practice had not given to me control over my own hysterical tendencies, I could not properly call Crums to account for a like affliction. He needed assistance rather than abuse; and the only helpful course to pursue just then was to ignore advice and keep silent. Presently, Crums withdrew and stormed himself into a state of exhaustion, quite alone.

Then, just before dinner, Crumbs and I both being in disgrace with the immediate family, we went to walk apart; at least I did. Crumbs, who had isolated himself all day, presently joined me. His face was no longer purple; it had the pallor of long illness, and dark circles were underneath his eyes. At first we walked without speaking, but Crumbs' hand sought mine. We wanted to reassure each other but did not know how.

After a while Crumbs said:

"I can't talk about it—but I wove you." He was by now very well grown—at least seven years tall—but he retained much of his infant alphabet.

There was no need of explanation between us. Crumbs knew that I did not doubt his affection, and that, so far as it personally concerned me, the incident of the morning was closed; but it became my opportunity. In that hour Crumbs acquired a new view of his own possibilities. We talked comprehensively of



what such moments might mean in the course of a lifetime.

Crumbs aspired to many things—to be a motorman, most of all a soldier, because of the marching and the Rough Rider hat, a mounted policeman because of the horse, and finally a “boss” who walked round while men built “flats,”—an occupation which with he was familiar, having interviewed several “bosses” while “flats” were in process of construction near his home.

On this dread day when things went so radically wrong from morning till night, it was made plain to Crumbs that no man who knew such moments as he had just experienced could, by any possible means, become a “boss” of anything — not even of a dog. That which till now had been largely a theory, confronted him as a condition necessary to his personal interest, and self-control became a matter of correspondingly large importance. Love alone could not mend his temperamental weaknesses. He needed

to call in, or to have called in, all the forces possible—love, self-interest, vanity and fear. All these were required for his rescue. He began to perceive that in such a moment of abandon he might kill a man, destroy property, beat his horse to death, or run a car-load of people off the track. He perceived that he should become hated for a bad man, despised for a weak one, jeered at for a foolish one and finally come to naught, even if he did not get so far as the penitentiary.

To be sure, there was the very reasonable and true statement that maybe he could not help his tantrums. The scene of the morning certainly had not been premeditated. He explained to me that it was "something inside," and to this I agreed. Then we decided that, if wicked impulses already had the upper hand, he was a sick boy and must go to some place reserved for those who could not control themselves; but we also agreed that it was only fair he should have a

chance to find out just how far the matter of self-control was in his own hands, before he was sent into retirement. In trying mutually to think out a way to help him, it was determined that at such times of uncontrol, he was instantly to think of motormen, "bosses," mounted policemen and soldiers; of how they marched and how he would like to have a Rough Rider hat. In short, he was instantly to put his mind upon the pageantry of life and to keep it there till I or something could come to his rescue.

We went in and composed a march tune that was to belong to Crumbs alone. He was to think of this and march to decency and good intentions by it whenever he felt the horror of blind wickedness coming upon him. The tune was a kind of combination of *La Marseillaise*, *America* and *Coronation*. We learned it together; at least Crumbs, who had a martial sense of time, and who according to requirements sang "up," when it went up and "down" when it went down,

learned something which was not a tune, but which could not be mistaken for anything but our "*Good Times*" march.—That was what we decided to call it—our *Good Times* march!

Crums and I must learn to march to that impromptu measure or there would be no good times for us. The day came when storms were averted by the mere stamping of my feet according to the "good times" measure. It was better to stamp than to sing; because it had the effect of instantly surprising the mind, and of causing an emotional pause.

At six years of age, Crums would grow purple with vicious, hysterical impulse, then pause, recognise the measure, turn white with sudden emotional revulsion and grin in a sickly way. The difficulties of his problem were apparent in the physical exhibition that accompanied his effort to control himself; but Crums was learning that tendencies toward *original sin* can be wiped out

with practice and with strong enough incentive.

I learned something to my own advantage the evening after the episode of the shoes. In the night—because sleep did not visit either of us promptly—Crumbs told me solemnly that he had “got good again” because he had not been whipped as I had been advised to whip him.

“When they were telling you to whip me, I made up my mind just to kill myself as soon as you had done it—not to make you feel bad, but because it wouldn’t be any use to live any more again. It wouldn’t be any use any more, because you see I did love you all the time I was saying I didn’t, but I couldn’t stop. And if you’d whipped me, I’d known you couldn’t ever understand if I tried to ‘splain. I felt so bad, I *couldn’t* ‘splain. And if I couldn’t ‘splain I was going to be dead right off.”

“But there are going to be times when it is needful to whip you—I think. Am

I to believe that you mean to kill yourself if I must whip you?"

"No, you just spank me and it will be all right;—*use judgment*.—Your judgment, not anybody's else." (I would not have smiled even under cover of the dark, for a fortune). "I don't want you ever to let anybody know if you must whip me because he mightn't ever know after that, that we loved each other—and I couldn't stand it."

Crumbs was jealous of the dignity of our relations, and no sane person could find fault with that. If I could just keep that regard for our mutual affection and friendship big within him, I believed that Crumbs and I might come out all right after all. And oh, the dear gentleman!—who sometimes still forgot to take off his hat, but who would never, never wash his linen in public because he "couldn't stand it."

## CHAPTER VIII

### GENEROSITY AND SELF CONTROL

I LEARNED early that one of Crumb's strongest *original tendencies* was appreciation, or gratitude, and that he was naturally generous, so it followed that one of his chief delights would lie in the well-being of others. However, in one so young, generosity was only a tendency, to be developed or lost as the case might be. There came times when he inevitably preferred to find his best happiness in more direct ways than in the good of others; but the "still small voice," having once made itself strongly heard, gave Crumbs no peace, however much his generous tendency became subordinated. While he might elect ultimately to go through life pleasing himself at the expense of others, he could never like many another, do so without experiencing a torturing reaction.

If Crumbs were going to live for self alone, I could have preferred he should do so without regret. A state of complete indifference would be better for himself as well as for the people whom he might ruin. I recalled certain notable examples of perversity to whose weakness of disposition crime was impossible, remorse always imminent, but who averted despair and unhappiness from no one. Such people make eternal demands upon sympathy, give nothing, but require the combined moral force of an entire family to support them. I desired that Crumbs should be something definite, and it seemed quite likely that he would so turn out.

After I discovered his generous tendency, it became my habit to give excessive expression to my appreciation, when he thrust upon me something coveted by himself. It struck me that there could be no more successful lure than the certain evidence of an accomplished purpose. This method worked very well



for a long time. It always answered with myself, but there came a time, in his seventh year, when alien surroundings brought to the surface hitherto unsuspected tendencies and very human weaknesses, such as revenge, retaliation and the like.

In speaking of Crumbs and His Times, it now becomes easier to present them in their negations than in their positive aspects. There was a point of view never taught him, which he had absorbed, and this was to become apparent only when his mind was antagonised by a wholly strange presentment of life.

There is a give and take, which we of large wisdom and far-seeing habit recognise without making demonstration; the give and take which is a part of our method of self-preservation. But that "give" of reciprocity is a "give" quite apart from the "give" of privilege; it is a matter of expediency. There are people to whom the joy of generous impulse is all unknown, but they may be

Justice itself, and give the full measure of what they receive by sheer force of selfish intent. This sort of punctillious plan works very well indeed where life is reduced to its largest material terms—but it leaves the heart cold. It ignores the existence of disinterested benevolence.

It was just before his seventh birthday that Crumbs fell foul of this unprofitable class. The irresistible demand from within to more than share, even utterly to sacrifice their own bread in the interests of others, was absent among those with whom Crumbs was now associated, but I dare say a share-and-share-alike system prevailed, in its most painful precision. Up to this time, he had not learned that as applied to things material there was any other conduct in life than generous conduct. Now he witnessed a new régime.

Henceforth, was Crumbs to be either superlatively fair for love of generosity, or was he to be exacting in his own in-

terests?—which, I did not know and he did not know.

For many days the new régime was a source of marvel to him. Later, it roused in him a spirit of hate and of rebellion. The cause of his disturbance was quite unformulated by him, but it was very real. He did not even know to what he should attribute his distraction; but one day his misery found voice thus:

“I don’t like it. I hate it. I won’t give anybody anything. Don’t nobody care!” For the first time, the philosophy contained in those three words became a menace to his dear future.

*Don’t nobody care!*

Something should have been done by a wise mother, but Crumbs and I had no wisdom to fall back upon—only his three words of philosophy and our affection. I determined not to pervert his moral sense by standing for that which he resented and which was contrary to our familiar practice of six years:

I would not thus avert from him the Ancient Chance.

I could not assure Crumbs that he was wrong: he was right. With the oppressive condition of precise and measured justice about us, I began to believe it was better to be wrong than to be just. There is a certain high-sounding preachment to the effect that one should be just before one is generous, but without the spirit of generosity as a pusher, I have never known anything like symmetrical justice. One shoulder is nearly always higher than the other. Conscience is there, and Intention is there, but Discrimination is off gathering flowers for the funeral.

We were at this time in the mountains, where the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker came over the hills periodically, instead of habitually, and delivered to us whatever they saw fit. Crumbs and these people were friends. Alas for Crumbs! It was the butcher who brought about the inevitable.

He robbed someone's cherry tree in Crumb's behalf, and brought him the first cherries of the season. They were still on the branch, red and luscious. Crumbs stripped them all off with deliberation, except four. Then he took the branch within and divided up with the head of the family who tasted, pronounced the cherries good and inadvertently reached for more.

"Can't have any more," said Crumbs. "There are only four—'n' that's your share."

The head of the family apologised. Shortly afterward Crumbs wandered indifferently into my precincts and closed the door; immediately his conduct underwent a mighty change. It rained cherries. The affluence of Crumb's pockets was surprising, the redness of his face, the trembling of his hands were painful. It was a fruity and emotional crisis.

"I was just bein' *fair* with *her*," he quavered. "There weren't but four on that limb—but there's bushels for you."

And Crumbs with only two cherries inside a small boy's capacity, placed his all at my disposal.

"I am afraid you were not fair," I suggested. "It was not fair to say that you had only four."

"Didn't,—just four on that limb. These weren't mine. They were yours."

"Not then."

"Yep—made up my mind about 'em when I picked 'em off outside."

"That is the letter not the spirit of the law," I said, but this was out of Crumb's depth. He was momentarily silenced but rose, triumphant:

"Don't nobody care!" Life was possibly beer and skittles for us in those days, but it was not cakes and ale.

It was Crumb's first real brush with the world. The conditions were unlovely to him, although there was much good to admire in them, but for a broad-gauge boy they were bound to be injurious. So they were, but if hurtful in some ways they revealed a delightful

truth which took root in a generous soil. When conditions were not altogether favourable to happiness, Crumbs not infrequently said:

"You go a-walking—an' I'll stay and bear it."

Thus I saw that though unfavourable conditions are seldom helpful to anyone, those at least went to prove that the plan of living up to a child's individuality is not abortive.

After a first resistance to conditions, conducted on the lines of the incident of the cherries, Crumbs seemed to accept the situation in a non-committal way. That one of his pronounced characteristics should appear passive gave me more food for thought. In short, Crumbs never let me weary for lack of material; my chief trouble being that I could not think fast enough to keep up with the progression of his mind; yet in comparison with some people I was a lightning calculator.

Eventually, the problem resolved it-

self thus: the time had come when Crumbs must love virtue for itself alone. —That state of mind, when all is said, implies conceit; a kind of Thank-God-I-am-not-as-other-men attitude, which may be deplorable, but its criminality must be relatively considered. In comparison with some things, it is godly!

I must either permit Crumbs actively to hate his surroundings, or else accept his passive contempt for them. He had to learn that unlovely things are the accidents of life, the exceptions to its nice refinements which prove the rule that all the world is beautiful. Cynicism and Crumbs were not so far apart that I could safely count upon their never meeting. "Don't nobody care" was pretty frequently in my ears and in my thoughts, in this transition stage. Crumbs must be taught the difference between the demands of ordinary civility and insincerity. He had to learn that civility to others was after all a tribute to his own dignity, while insin-



cerity was an attribute of the unregenerate. They were nice propositions that could be elucidated only by accident.

For a long time, Crumbs had to take my word for it that seemly demeanour toward people of whom he did not approve, was not "just lies." His disapproval would "out" in hazardous ways. He would make ingenious faces in secret, when nature too strongly rebelled; grimaces sometimes openly surprised, and which covered both him and me with confusion. Indeed tragedy became so imminent that once Crumbs and I withdrew to the lake-side nearby for a thrashing. I explained that it would hurt me more than it did him; and he told me tearfully "I'll let you off this time." The session was a strange mingling of the comic and tragic, but it presented a proposition and instituted a new régime.

He was unaware that he had done anything positively wrong and so was I; but I explained that he had fallen into a

way quite unbeautiful, and while that which was about to happen was not precisely punishment, it was to be considered by him in the light of a reminder.

For the first time, I was compelled to approach the problem in a manner personal and first hand. I asked Crumbs if he desired to be in all respects like those worthy but unsatisfactory people who had caused his restiveness. He eagerly did not. Then I made clear to him that a long season of self-control, to end only with the grave, must begin at once; that flesh and spirit were liable to riot upon occasion and almost without warning, and that it must more than ever become my business in life to cure his uncontrol. I made it plain that I knew from personal experience how uncontrol brought its own punishment; a punishment so bitter that it deserved none other, and by making this personal history picturesque I held Crumbs' attention. To avert intolerable consequences, I must help him to remember. Some-

times the reminder to walk in the straight and narrow way would take one form, sometimes another, We should have to be governed by circumstances.

He took his thrashing patiently, and we shed tears together, but after it was over, Crumbs perked up instantly and remarked:

"Don't you cry. You didn't make any faces and don't have to be reminded, 'n' I've got licked 'n' I can't stand any more."

Dear Crumbs! So small, so honest a gentleman! If only he had had a set of good manners to go with it—but then he hadn't as yet.

As he walked toward the house in silence, he remarked:

"That's like Mulvaney getting licked for my badness—when I was young, isn't it?" I saw the relation of ideas, but did not think it well to admit it.

"Do you think so?" I asked.

"Huh-huh! If nobody had made me feel queer, I wouldn't 'a made faces. I

think it isn't square, but—don't nobody care!"

The stoical touch made the night wind colder to me, but I hoped there would be enough of affection in reserve for Crumbs as he went through life, to raise the temperature.

Thus, he resigned himself. His politeness did not become oppressive but neither did his conduct remain unseemly.

Crumbs got whipped oftener during that seventh year than in any other one of his life; but I do not recall that upon any occasion did a whipping take the form of punishment. It was too serious a matter with us for that. It stood for regret, for a chastened mind, for a reminder, for a great many things that bore no smack of brutality. These whippings were flagellations of the soul, so to speak, and the physical suffering was secondary. If this had not been true, I could not have whipped him at all, any time after his fifth year, because Crumbs was, physically, too strong for me. I think

he perceived this, and that was the reason why he stood up so like a gentlemen at those moments. I explained to him once that unless he made it very convenient for me indeed, I should not be able to whip him at all. The situation may not have been usual, but I fancy it could be brought about with almost any child. It is a simply a matter of the "point of view," unfaltering patience, and love to spare.

The seventh year led to many confidences and quiet *causeries* between us. Among other things Crumbs learned to stick to conversational abstractions, to avoid personalities. Certain conditions warranted many intimate conversations between us, and Crumbs learned early in the game that only the unregenerate discuss the personal eccentricities of people; that by intelligent effort, almost anything can be turned into an abstraction. All this led to numerous pros] and cons.

"If you behave so 'queer' that you

aren't loved, what happens?" was Crumbs' inquiry.

"Well, sometimes one thing and sometimes another; but very often totally innocent persons have to be taken down to the beach and birched." Crumbs turned his eyes upon me, and slowly nodded.

"Like Mul getting licked for me when I was young." Vicarious punishment continued to be an element altogether startling and impressive to him. I hoped he would never develop the vicarious conscience, however.

"It seems to me if you don't behave so you are woved awfully, you don't have such a dreadful good time yourself," he reflected. I knew of whom and what he was thinking, but I answered:

"Oh, I don't know: I've noticed that some people who are not specially lovable, worry less than those who love and are more beloved."

Crumbs thought along his own lines for a moment before elucidating his point.

"Well, Aunt"—he paused, remembering to stick to abstractions. "I have *seen* people," he went on "who weren't wowed in our style, and if they *do* get most everything they want, they don't *sound* wike it—and they don't *wook* wike it. I've *seen* people," he continued, speaking judicially, "who never *could* a had the big feeling in their throats wike I have when you and I wook at each other. I wook at you and—and it's just bully." He nodded solemnly and put his hand to his throat, while his eyes became suffused.

"I feel it now," he said.

Crumbs had got to the bottom of things after all, and it almost reconciled me to his gaucheries of conduct. It had been a lively question with me whether he was going to assimilate the new thoughts, and the emotional sterility surrounding him, or whether these conditions would serve their turn as a fearsome example. It began to look as if Crumbs were going to learn of adversity. I was sorry if

it had to be so, but rejoiced that all things seemed to work together for good to those who loved—somebody or something. Crumbs loved me beyond all doubt.



## CHAPTER IX

### FACT VERSUS TRUTH

**I**N course of time I found something as important as Crumb's emotions to be in danger. His excellent intelligence was being tampered with. He knew well how to be sophistical for his own purposes, and the problem of truth in the letter as in the spirit, had of late become a serious one. While I was doing my best, I suddenly discovered that the enemy Literality, was in camp and must be ousted. Those about us were slaves both to Fact and to Truth, but they could not discriminate the one from the other. In their own cases perhaps it no longer mattered very much. Their lives would of necessity always be circumscribed and they were mature people, who had learned their limited lessons in a way that they could never unlearn, but

in Crumbs' case, it mattered very much.

I had found out for a certainty that Crumbs was going to be something definite as I wished him to be; and if he was not going to be definitely good then he was going to be definitely bad, so here confronting him and me, was that horrid shame of well-made minds, Literality. It seemed to fill all space.

I recognised this first when I heard Crumbs, whose ideas of a joke were only seven years old at best, say to a member of the family with whom we were placed:

"Wook at Mulvaney saying his prayers." The distressing reply came:

"Don't you know that is a lie, Crumbs? Don't you know if you tell a lie it is wicked, and children should be whipped for it?" Crumbs had no answer. For once he was paralysed into silence.

Crumbs had been taught to tell the truth first, last and all the time, but truth did not include any conclusion such as this. Probably "taught" is not the correct expression, when the manner of

Crumbs' education is under discussion; "insinuated," is more nearly right. A regard for truth had been insinuated into Crumbs' system since his first hour, therefore he might be called constitutionally truthful. He wore truth as he did his shirt—as something that could not be dispensed with.

Literality was one of those *original tendencies* which I had grubbed up, and which I meant to root out if Crumbs, himself, came with it.

The literal mind does a large amount of harm to other people, even if it be not the symbol of hopeless limitation. Crumbs need not be literal in his interpretations, when it was kinder to be otherwise, nor in his statements, when it was more civil not to be. If he became literal he would never be a good business man, nor an artist, nor an agreeable friend, nor a tolerable husband, nor a just father, nor "good form," nor be inspired with the real spirit of truth; in short he could

never be anything that was profitable or nice.

Truthful Crumbs had said that his dog was saying his prayers, and had been literally called a liar—which was neither true nor polite. I was accustomed to let Crumbs take the initiative: he was so much cleverer than I. In time he sought me.

“Say, is she crazy?” he asked, still too disturbed to elaborate his thought.

There are not many things which can be explained to a little child with telling, lasting results. Life to such a one is drama—comedy-drama or tragedy—according to the manner of presentation; but, however presented, it is all action. He reasons after the fact, and from the fact; seldom before the fact. It was beyond my powers to explain to Crumbs how Literalness had stepped in and spoiled the good game of Truth. The knowledge would have to be insinuated by actual demonstration, and thinking how to do it kept me awake nights.

"If she isn't crazy, then I think she is telling lies," said Crumbs resuming the subject. "Because you see she knew Mulvaney couldn't be saying prayers. She knew if he could say 'em, I wouldn't tell her so unless he was doing it for sure."—Crumbs was so completely satisfied with his own impregnability, since his truthfulness was under discussion, that he could argue only from one side, but Fate was to rescue us once more. It happened thus:

A day later, while the incident was still fresh in our minds, a message was conveyed to me in Crumbs' presence:

"A—said for you to meet her in town at half past three"—we were living in the country—"and if you don't want to you need not." Crumbs was particularly fond of "A—" and he arose in wrath.

"She didn't say any such thing, and she was as loving as could be. I heard her"—once more nothing but death could stop him. "She said if—if—" He stopped of his own accord. Life had become too much for him.

"Weil," said the Member of the Family, sternly, "I will hear from you iust what she did say." But Crumbs could not speak. I knew all about it, but he did not, nor did the Member of the Family. All her life her tone and words had been literal, and by those of us who knew her uncompromising goodness, this was understood.

"Yes, Crumbs, we will hear just what A— said."

"She said what Aunt G— said—but didn't mean it; and so just the same Aunt G— has told a lie on her." Deep! deep! and what was to be done? Well, this helped—along with a good many other examples—to teach Crumbs that good Fact is not necessarily good Truth.

When quite alone, I asked him to tell me in confidence precisely what "A—" had seemed to him to say, which was this: "If H— feels like coming into town to-day at half-past three, I will be at such a point, and we can put in a little time together. Tell her not to come at any

inconvenience to herself." Now, this was a good deal to deduce from a couple of dozen words, but then Crumbs' love of Truth, and his understanding of it, had made him include the tone and manner in which those words were uttered. In the absence of tone and manner, the bald statement resulted in a perversion of the Truth for which he would not stand, being in love with his cousin.

Could I expect Crumbs to be beloved by anybody but me? Hardly. His methods were too crude, even if not quite literal. And again, Crumbs, who was to be a good man or a bad one according to the emotional conditions about him, promised to create conditions for himself from which no human being could rescue him.

According to theory and rule, unemotional conditions and literal living were the proper environment to neutralise his excessive tendencies. Theoretically, Crumbs' nervous system should have been greatly benefited by the sit-

uation. Well, you may pour oil and water together, but you've got to have a third agent to make an emulsion. Crumbs' third agent was affection, approval, and he had almost destroyed his agent. Nobody heartily approved of Crumbs but me and Mulvaney perhaps, and I could not blame anybody but Crumbs and myself. His personality was fascinating at times, attractive always, hence it was not appearances that were against him but his "point of view," unrelieved by good manners.

I could not find fault with the point of view, because I had been insinuating that upon him since he was born, and I was still unconvinced that it was wrong. I was able to see that the real trouble lay not with his point of view, which was much like that of all decent folk, but with his method, and I could not provide a silk-finish method, for a seven-year-old boy.

Before he was seven, he had not even the superficial graces which make bad



children endurable—which even make them ornaments to society. I had not been able to earn Crumbs' living, to care for him in sickness and in health, to make him happy, and to give him A 1 manners, all at the same time. I had to do a good deal in sections—the nursing and the living; but the loving and its substantial results had to go on all the time, even in our sleep.

Frequently, after I had got him trained not to put his feet on the ceiling, he would seek that form of repose in some thoughtful moment, after some serious passage between us. He sought it all unconscious of its inelegance; and I never felt justified in interrupting Crumbs' train of thought in those eventful moments. I knew he had arrived at conclusions when in that position—that were someday to put out a fire, save another man's life or just a human being's feelings. He evolved some large ideas while in this inverted, unpleasing position, and while others were writhing under the

monstrousness of his conduct. I knew he was doing wrong, but I could not help it.

When Crumbs has chosen to think, I have held my breath, and have frequently put a newspaper between his heels and the French polish, when I have thought I could do so without interrupting him. Sometimes, as I have done this, Crumbs has come to; has taken down his feet and said; "I didn't think." This proved that he had no antagonism to decent forms, only he "didn't think."

Maybe I should have thrashed him; I don't know. I know that I hoped good form would some day seem to Crumbs to be one of the most worthy and serious problems of life. I more or less believed that he would be alert enough to observe that good form was really that symbol of good feeling and good conscience necessary to the preservation of peace between nations and people.

However it was to be at his noon-day, at a little before seven Crumbs was still

unpopular, quite apart from his conduct, by which alas! we must be judged.—

He truly deserved to be popular, even as he longed to be. Disapproval was almost as disastrous to him as a congestive chill. Poor Crumbs! Dear Crumbs!

Yes, I decided that the only way I could make him “think” to be well mannered according to essential form—which is all that a little child may be permitted to go by—was to make him understand that good manners were invented for the mutual convenience of people. Thus I would be able to put form on the high plane of love for ones neighbour. So we worked around to love in the end, and love was something that Crumbs could understand at any age, because love is elemental.

This method was a good deal like that of learning languages by learning Dutch first of all, and then acquiring the others by a comparison of the Dutch Bible with the Italian Bible, or the French Bible or the—well, Love is the Volapuk

of all humanity, and it is good that it is so easily learned and so pleasant to remember. Whenever I thought out Crumbs with love for my illuminator, I began to hope again. It was better than wisdom, because from Love, Wisdom may grow; but very frequently Love does not spring full-grown or any other way, from the loins of Wisdom.

I learned in those days how certainly the best within us responds to the best in others, and how the worst in others is re-echoed in ourselves. Crumbs' word had heretofore been respected. There were times now when it was not, and he developed a tendency to lie. Affection alone was to be the corrective. Crumbs was accused of leaving a peach-pit in an unseemly place, and he denied having done so. His sense of injustice was bringing the demon into his face, when he appeared before me and explained the matter. He had been accused upon the slender evidence of an unsound judgment which assumed that when things went wrong,

or when material was found misplaced it was immaturity that was responsible.

As a matter of fact, I myself, was the culprit. Crumbs could not exonerate himself, because the witness of another's imagination was so much stronger as evidence, than the word of a boy who had not yet learned the penalties of truth-telling. Accident alone cleared him. It was I who had disgraced the family. I started at once to set the matter right, and have the criticism placed where it belonged, but when Crumbs discovered I was the culprit, he demanded that I be silent because "If you tell, they'll get after you too—and I don't mind."

If he broke a dish, he assumed that my sympathy was his, because it had never till now occurred to him that any sane person wantonly destroyed things. But now he found out that though older people were pardoned for their accidents, little children were not; and he expressed his opinion of the matter to me on one

occasion when we had entered into our closet and had shut the door.

“When I get into trouble any more I’m going to lie about it—because I fink all these people are crazy, and it isn’t safe to tell ’em what happens to you.”

Crumbs’ reasoning was very primitive—straight from effect to cause or from cause to effect, without amelioration or interruption.

It was not a very bad reasoning, but one had to be brought up to understand it. A lie was no longer an outrage upon fairness: it now seemed to him to have become necessary, if he would secure fair treatment for himself.

However Crumbs was pretty well grounded by this seventh year, and he had a good many things to fall back upon by way of help. For example, he had confidence in me, and what he could not translate for himself, he was now willing to accept from me as fact;—a thing which he would not have been willing to do in his littlest

childhood. After a time or two, Crumbs began to see that even I should be unable to believe him if he made lying one of his accomplishments. I think he did not care particularly if anyone else about him believed him or not, but certainly it would be inconvenient to lose my confidence. Thus he dropped lying, as inexpedient, and when he felt the injustice of his conditions he grew into the habit of saying. "Don't nobody care." Once he remarked to me "Isn't it redickelous?" and so it was. So 'redickelous' that our sense of humour saved the day.

Truth was so constitutional with him that one day when he had clipped Mulvaney's hair on one side with my shears, and the dog presented an appearance quite unlike a French poodle which Crumbs had tried to have him emulate, I heard the groceryman say outside:

"You had better come along with me Mr. Crumbs, before your mother finds out it was you who sheared the dog."

"Do you think she'd make a fuss?"

"Sure. You come along down the road with me—and she'll think the folks next door did it."

"Oh, Lord!" said Crumbs "then I guess I'd better go and tell her quick," which was satisfactory enough evidence to exonerate him from meanness of spirit, in the eyes of the grand jury, his mother.



## CHAPTER X

### THE SEVENTH YEAR

CERTAIN things which came along in that seventh year were difficult, but not impossible to accomplish, if a woman sat up nights. One of these was the forming of class distinctions in a little child's mind, without running into snobbishness. There comes a time when a child must learn that there are differences in people, which he must take into account in choosing his friends and in forming his associations. Crumbs was democratic. He loved the grocer's boy, which proved to me that his untrammelled instincts were very good indeed, and that his first exhibition of taste, demonstrated in this friendship, was not to be criticised; but there are grocer-boys and grocer-boys, as there are princes and princes. There came another

grocer-boy with whom Crumbs' longed to associate, because he could "swim just like anything." I knew he also could curse "just like anything" and this time Crumbs' choice was not my choice. I told him that I objected to number two grocer-boy because he was of another class, and should not be fraternised with. Then Crumbs wished to know why he was of another class, and altogether we got badly mixed on the question of grocer-boys, good, bad and indifferent; of class, of Crumbs, and of prejudices. The end of it was that Crumbs was made, arbitrarily, to obey, though still hankering after number two grocer-boy.

One day an automobile stopped at the door and its driver asked for a bucket of water to help out his machinery. The number two grocer-boy was sitting on the curb and he went round to fetch the water, while Crumbs and the chauffeur became engaged in a conversation which greatly pleased Crumbs. It had rela-

tion to wheels and cogs and carbureters and washers and to other laundry-like things, no doubt. When number two grocer-boy came with the water he said: "Give me fi' cents?" and the machine folk cheerfully complied with the request. Then Number Two went off. Crumbs lingered and watched proceedings. When the water had served its purpose and the pail was empty, the driver handed it to Crumbs, asking him if he would kindly take it back. Crumbs assented with alacrity, and certainly with pleasure, since he had a sort of passion for being useful to grown folks.

Then the driver called out: "Here, my boy! Take this." He put ten cents into Crumbs' hand and then Crumbs was in trouble. He had the ten cents and the pail, and the machine party was gone. Crumbs had been instructed in the matter of receiving monetary gifts which were always a source of much annoyance both to him and me.

Well-meaning friends who give children money are the cause of more disturbance than they are aware. There were times when it would have been a crime for Crumbs to decline the stray pennies pressed upon him, because the givers would not have grasped any motive whatever for his refusal. There were others who could be politely but firmly set aside. They would not think the boy inappreciative, nor yet "set-up," but instead his dignity would be respected.

Crumbs had an instinct which half revealed to him the distinction between people and people. He returned to the house, worried. "I have the money and they are gone," he said. "What ought I to do?"

"I guess you can't very well do anything upon this occasion. You were with Number Two who asked for money because he had rendered a service. People are known by the company they keep. I guess you'll have to stand it.

Those people didn't think much of you probably, or they wouldn't have offered you money for a personal favour. Of course they thought you wanted it—there was Number Two who had asked for it, and you were with him."

Crums made his own class distinctions after that. It was a peculiarly complete demonstration of cause and effect; but this matter of unearned increment was a touchy point with Crums.

Later on there arose considerable difficulty anent the matter of material honesty. Crums had long since learned that things which were not his were to be let alone, but the basic principle of honesty was not particularly understood by him. As he had comprehended such matters, the things of others were to be avoided because others would be inconvenienced if deprived of them; but there came a day when he so coveted what was not his, that he seriously thought out the problem for himself, and he thought wrong. It was the case of the

spring overcoat so dreaded by me; the subject of my endless fearful imaginings. The incident of the spring overcoat had arrived.

A building was in process of erection near by, and among other supplies of the contractor's were some iron rods, made with cross pieces, which Crumbs believed would make admirable picks for small boys. He had long coveted a pick. There were hundreds of them at hand. One day he approached the "boss" and presented the case to him. He offered three cents—all he at that moment possessed—for one. The "boss" told him to be off, that the "picks" were needed in building, and were not for covetous creatures like Crumbs.

The explanation was unsatisfactory to Crumbs and his disappointment keen. He told me that he had offered to pay for the man's "picks," that the man had hundreds of them, and he guessed the man was a pretty mean man. I paid no special attention to the incident, hardly

heard Crumbs' statement, and dismissed the matter from my mind. A day later Crumbs came to me in excitement, exhibited a "pick," and explained with elation how he had grabbed the instrument when the "boss" wasn't looking. I asked him why he had stolen. He was outraged.

"I haven't stolen. I offered to pay for it an' he was a mean man. He's got hundreds and don't need 'em all. He can't need 'em all. And when he wouldn't sell 'em nor be kind, I just thought out how to get it for myself. If he hadn't but a few I wouldn't have done it, but he's just mean. I'd give him half of 'em if they were mine and he asked for one." Fortunately, the officers at the police station over the way, were not entirely strange to me. I explained to Crumbs that he must either go back and openly restore the "pick" or he must stand the chances of arrest. If he should escape arrest he would have to endure isolation; and my contempt for him would be eternal.

Wouldn't I let him stay with me any more? His tone was awesome.

Yes, he could stay, but he would be to me after that as if he were some strange boy—one I should never learn to like. This was a serious proposition. There was Crumbs' side of the case as well as the legitimate side. To him, it was a matter of having possessed himself of that to which he had a right, since he believed no one else needed it, and since the world was so hard that it refused a boy even those joys he was ready to pay for.

"Are you going down to give that man his pick?" I asked.

"I—don't—know," he answered. "I'm going to think about it."

"And if I never love you again as long as we live?" Crumbs turned his eyes upon me.

"I don't know," he said. "I'm going to think about that, too. Maybe if you wont ever love me anymore I shall decide you are wrongin' me." It was a bad day for us. Frequently I looked out of the



window at the police station, and Crumbs began to grow uneasy.

"What are you looking over there for?" he asked.

"I am anxious about your case. I think you will be arrested."

"I'll 'splain it all to the ossifers, 'n' they're my friends and they'll believe me, and tell the 'boss' he ought to be ashamed."

"You have done something that your friends cannot save you from. The goods belong to the man. He can have you arrested. Your friends at the police station will feel very badly about it—but they cannot help you." Crumbs became disquieted. Before night I sent a note to the police station, and within the hour one of Crumbs' friends came over. He was a discriminating "ossifer" and the matter did not take long. He had come to arrest the young man who had taken the contractor's goods. He seemed about to weep and Crumbs was frightened.

"I'll give it back" he said, and started to get it.

"I'm afraid that will not do," the officer explained. "As I am your friend and as the sergeant is your friend, we wont put this matter down in our big book over there, till we have done all we can for you. If we should put it on the blotter, of course you would never get over it. Everybody would hear about it, and it would go pretty hard with a young man like you. You could never get a job in the world—guess you'd starve to death after you got out of jail. But I'll tell you, if the 'boss' will consent to take this back, and will forgive you, you'll get off. But if he won't take it back and drop the case, you're up against it, Crumbs."

Crumbs was so frightened that he did not rightly know what he was doing, but he found his cap, took the pick and with sparkling, feverish eyes, he started to the door. If Crumbs lived through it, I was afraid I shouldn't.

"Wait son, and I'll go with you, "I said, and followed him. He grasped my hand with a spasmodic clutch and we got half way down the stairs, a solemn procession indeed; then Crumbs stopped.

"Say ossifer, you said if I get put in the big book the sergeant writes in, I'll never get a job nor anything, and it'll be awful as long as I live." The officer nodded solemnly.

"Then—you go back"—the boy said. "I'll—I'll stand it alone," and he led me back up the stairs to the door.

Surely if such a child grows to harmful manhood, even with all the handicap of erraticism and emotional excess, the mother will be to blame!

Crumbs returned a little later, but could not say much. He threw himself into a chair, nodded many times, and sobbed, but with no exhibition of tears.

"The Boss said I was a good boy to come right up to him with it, anyhow," he breathed. Inwardly I anathematized the Boss. It was no time for extenua-

tions nor ameliorations nor suavity. It was a moment in which Crumbs should have met the worst. Later, we had our familiar talk about those things which constitute good citizenship; and in the end Crumbs voiced the opinion of several of us: "Life's no cinch!"

Crumbs, as he grew to his seven years, seemed most of all to desire to be a good citizen, public spirit being large within him. He is still little more than seven, and may take the spring overcoat yet, but there are no alarming indications.

A child is capable of almost any development if its *original tendencies* are forever under advisement, and if a woman regards the making of a man or woman as a serious matter. Such a mother will encounter resistance in her child from the moment it experiences the first colic, unless it be a-typic. A rudimentary moral education must be conducted along the lines of least resistance until enough character has been insinuated into the sys-

tem to stand for something on its own account.

Morals can be developed irrespective of a child's mental alertness, to a very large extent; because morals may be insinuated through the affections. But the process calls for something like a creative faculty on the mother's part, and she will probably never have a vacation this side of the grave; but, given a fair intelligence and the power of affection not entirely lacking, a generation of maternal application will raise the average, both of morals and of intelligence.

One of the surest things is that a child cannot be taught arbitrarily to be "good," with lasting results. Hence, in implanting a moral character, one is bound to develop what of intelligence a child has. The nearest approach to arbitrary teaching of right that can be done, is to make appeal to the affections and to remember all the time that the child is born with some kind of brain—

even if it could be at first little better than unconvoluted guava jelly instead of what it is—the greatest thing in the world. To teach along these lines cannot be called an arbitrary method. It is a continual demonstration of cause and effect.

There are several moral vestigia that may set up an inflammatory process, as certainly as that there are left-overs of anatomy; and these consist of hereditary traits and taints. Given a debauched parent, one must be on the watch for something unexpected in her child. The unexpected need not of a necessity be iniquitous. The heredity may exhibit itself as a wholesale hyperæsthesia of spirit; and this may turn out a genius as well as a devil, but it is likely to turn out something extreme.

Even if the extreme tendencies are good ones, eternal vigilance on somebody's part is necessary. Tendencies toward excess cannot be left to themselves at any time. Excessive goodness goes off at half-cock

and may be either futile or harmful in its application, because unregulated. A child with a debauched ancestry will not necessarily be debauched in turn, but he is likely to have a set of nerves and tendencies which will render him a thousand-fold more vulnerable than his neighbours, and possibly a thousand-fold more capable. Either way it means that a woman must sit up nights with her fears—and never once betray to her best beloved that she fears at all.

Moral confidence is moral assurance. A consciousness of Well-done inspires a capacity for Better-doing. This is not theory but the experience of all contemplative people who have found existence a struggle, and such being in the majority have a right to speak, even to postulate.

The most distressful factor, not of a subjective character, which a woman must meet, is the innocuous opinions on childhood of those women who have never brought up any children,

A woman who may be able to deal out abstruse philosophies, but who has not completely demonstrated her sex, and is still childless at forty, can not legitimately speak advisarily upon the subject of childhood. Such a woman will, nine times in ten, maintain that a mother is incapable of regarding her child without prejudice. This contention is not due to the woman's mental incapacity, but to her inexperience. Nothing on earth but motherhood could make such a statement from that kind of a woman appear in all its absurdity.

It is not even necessary that a mother should regard her problem unemotionally in order to perceive her child's distressful eccentricities of conduct, and then to sweat drops of blood over them. A mother needs only to be intelligent with the average intelligence. The woman who regards a child without any of a mother's emotions is incapable of unprejudice in such a case. It would be contrary to human nature if she could



regard unprejudicedly that which irritates her, since she lacks the sustaining and indulgent mood of motherhood. She not only observes the faults of a child which is not her own, but she is very properly distracted by them. Every one resents personal annoyance, but the woman who suffers it from her children is able to endure with hope.

No one can regard a child so unprejudicedly as his mother. She alone, sees the side-lights illumining the good and the bad, for both are with her day and night. That which to a mother may properly be interpreted as a superficial fault of behaviour, due to some experience to which she alone is privy, is likely to mean to the disinterested on-looker some radical defect of character. That which may be an evidence of a gracious spirit to the outsider, may stand to the mother either for a superficiality without meaning, or for something which may cause her anxiety. A mother's unprejudice lies in her affections; and "Love

is Vigilance," all other apothegms to the contrary. Fascinations may render us blind, but Love sees.

The man or woman who sits apart and looks on, wholly uninvolved except in superficial observation, is the least suitable person in the world to give advice in regard to the control of children. To them children are no more than children. To every intelligent mother the word implies a number of individuals, each entitled to the nicest distinctions in treatment.

One half the good results in training a child in the way he should go, spring from mother-love; the other half from sound intelligence. The prejudiced, childless woman lacks just half the qualification, and her opinion is not worth a cent.

She may run an orphan asylum, but she can't make men and women, as that is a good deal more than some of us can do, who have all the qualifications.

Because a woman refuses to discuss too

intimately her child, thereby revealing all she knows of his shortcomings, it does not follow that she is ignorant of them. Possibly she has some regard for her own dignity as made manifest in her child. A woman may not without excuse canvass her children's faults with anyone but their father or the family physician. The family physician is given place because a child's moral and physical health are sufficiently interdependent to require expert advice a good deal of the time.

The less a woman permits of personal discussion of her children, the better. Reticence makes for good form, if not for fair dealing.

First catch your child—and then teach him generosity, gratitude, love of his neighbour, regard for personal rights, the fundamental principles of good citizenship, optimism, and the “greatest of these,” which is SELF-CONTROL.

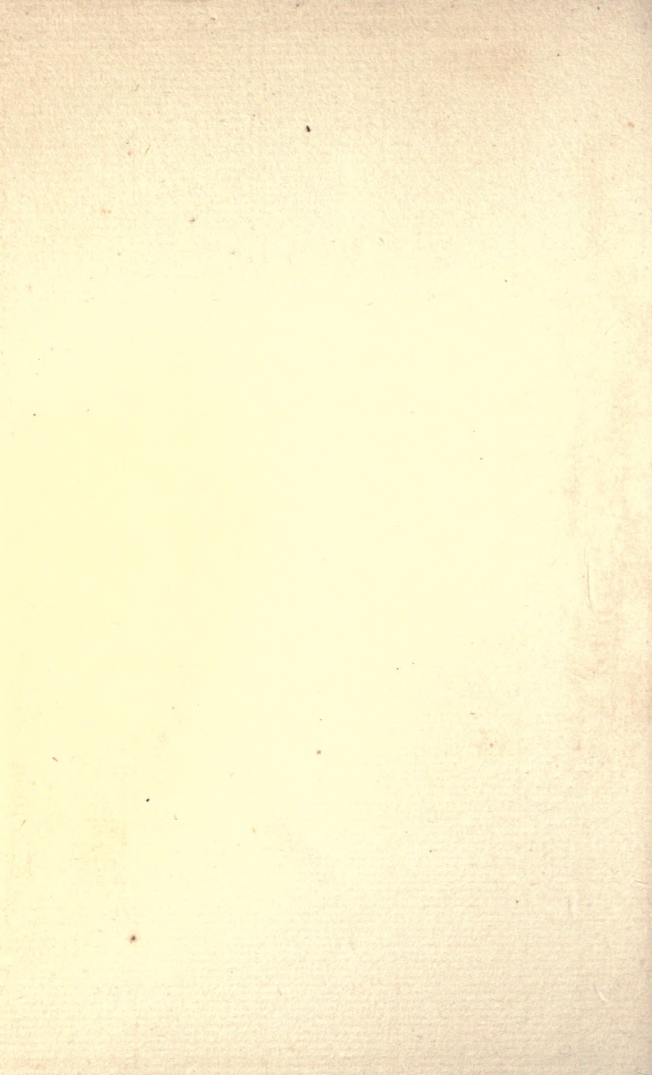














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